

VOL. NO.3

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## **CONSERVATION- THE FUTURE OF OUR PAST**

**SCIENCE  
AND  
ART  
PRESERVING  
CULTURAL  
IDENTITY**





*Vamana Avatar at the Court of King Bali, Basohli, 18th Century.  
National Museum, New Delhi.  
A miniature damaged by verdigris*

### VERDIGRIS

*A miniature painting. Some lovely green. As time progresses, slowly, inexorably, the green turns to brown. Then brownish black. The paper chars. It embrittles, corrodes and then simply fragments. The once green portions are lost forever. The vacant spaces show where the green colour had moved the artist and the admirer. Indian painters called this colour, "janghal". In the West it was known as 'Verdigris'.*

*The oldest of the manufactured copper greens, Verdigris, the Green of Greece, is a collective term for the blue/green copper salts of acetic acid.*

*Prepared especially in wine growing areas of Europe, piled winemarc and copper plates were subjected to fermentation. The copper became covered with blue and green crusts which were then scraped off. According to medieval recipes, copper strips were attached to a wooden block containing acetic acid and the sealed container is then buried under dung.*

*Some weeks later, the Verdigris is scraped off from the copper strips.*

*The traditional method in India is to treat pieces of copper with vinegar and expose them to the action of air. The pigment is then ground and applied, mixed with vegetable gum.*

*The corrosive nature of Verdigris manifests itself in a number of miniature paintings on paper, cloth paintings, scrolls and illustrated manuscripts, by way of discolouration, inducing fragility and fragmentation. This happens more in cities with high pollution levels. The precise mechanisms of decay have not been ascertained as yet, despite extensive research worldwide.*

*-Anupam Sah -  
Final Year Student of Conservation,  
National Museum Institute, New Delhi.*





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**SATYAJIT RAY**

(1921-1992)

*The world of cinema mourns the death of Satyajit Ray, the 'tall man' of Bengal. The man who raised Indian cinema from the pit of banal escapism to the stature of a meaningful idiom.*

*A creator far more than a crusader, Ray reoriented the classical spirit of creativity more than anyone else in Indian cinema. When his *Pather Panchali* was released in 1955, connoisseurs were stunned at his daring. Never before and never since has countryside been celebrated on celluloid with such lyricism and poignancy.*

*Ray was second only to Tagore in range and versatility. And yet he never repeated himself. Each of his movies opened breathtaking views of a new horizon. From the song of the rural road he effortlessly switches over to the tragic ambiguities of human existence in a metropolis, to the hilarious exploits of two nitwits. Here is God's plenty.*

*Ray's contribution to children's literature in Bengali also can never be over emphasised. In 1961 he revived the prestigious juvenile journal *Sundesh* founded by his grandfather and edited it till the end. He has authored as many as 36 titles and created quite a few immortal characters like Feluda, the truth-seeker, Professor Shanku, the eccentric scientist and Topsay, the over-zealot.*

*A true Renaissance man with a formidable and dignified presence, Ray has often been misunderstood as an 'elitist'. But the overwhelming reaction of both the common man and the cognoscenti at his passing away gives the lie to such narrow criticism. It is a pity that death struck him at his finest moment of glory when both the Oscar and the Bharat Ratna were awarded to him in quick succession. But then, such a man only dies for a moment and lives for ever.*

NIRMAL KANTI BHATTACHARYA



*Dear Friend,*

*This issue of THE EYE is a response to the request of our long time friends, Giri Kumar and Anupam Sah, to highlight some salient features of Conservation. Conservation of Man-Made Heritage or Cultural Properties as opposed to the Conservation of Natural Heritage.*

*Both Giri and Anupam are young students of Conservation at the National Museum Institute, New Delhi and were just right to be our Guest Editors for this issue. With the museum infrastructure at their disposal and the support of their other young friends, they got the issue together. They are anxiously awaiting reactions from our readers.*

*One cannot agree with them more on the need for Conservation. With the passing of each day, our efforts seem to be in the direction of de-linking ourselves from the familiar and creating fragile and isolated monuments to modernism. Formless outward growth is headed to destroy what is required for a sustained life of quality - our jungles and their indigenous peoples, wildlife, health systems, oral traditions and values.*

*Our cultural holdings have suffered too. They have been built upon, painted over, scribbled upon and wiped out altogether. There is nothing sacred about religious beliefs or excellence. We seem to be extolling the virtues of a few obviously marketable monuments for foreign exchange which is so precious to us. But what about the several lesser known, so called 'protected' monuments which have all but become public utility spots?*

*Malcolm Baldwin, in his article, refers to 'cultural amnesia'. If it wasn't for a timely marriage of Science and Art that produced a small band of conservators, our cultural holdings would have continued to be dismantled, removed out of context, faked or just plain shipped out of the country to antique collectors and museums abroad. Their status would be no different from the other resources that are going out of this country to fatten other economies. Practical conservation, therefore, is a knowledge that must combat decay and preserve our cultural holdings.*

*Today's India with its rapid urbanisation is becoming unaesthetic. Only a "collective aspiration for things beautiful and elevating", according to Manoj Das, can put things back in order. Let us, in our own small way, work towards the re-installation of aesthetics and make conservation a way of life.*

# ART AND THE MYSTIC

HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN



*"One aspect of Art is symbolism. Symbolism has not come from the human intellect, for it is born of intuition. The finer the soul, the better it is equipped in some way or the other to understand symbolical ideas. The artist who produces in his art a symbolical idea has learned it from what he has seen in nature and has interpreted it in his art. This is real inspiration. The finer the artist is, the finer the symbols he produces."*

Thus wrote Hazrat Inayat Khan, the Indian Sufi mystic who lived in India. He wrote in India and died abroad in 1927. He wrote prolifically on innumerable subjects, all tinged with the great wonderment that comes with the contemplation of the mysteries of the universe. Here are two essays, *THE ESSENCE OF ART* and the *IDEAL OF ART* extracted from his book, *SUFI MYSTICISM*.

## THE ESSENCE OF ART

Art may be defined as having four aspects. One aspect of art may be called *imitative art*, the tendency and ability

to produce as exactly as possible, on canvas or in clay, something which one sees. This is the first stage, and one which leads the artist further on the

path of art. In order to develop this faculty, the mind must be fully concentrated. When the artist lacks concentration he cannot observe objects and their beauty keenly, and therefore he is not able to reproduce them exactly as he sees them. Concentration has such great power that a concentrated person can penetrate into an object, and can see not only the outside of it but also the inside. In other words a concentrated person not only sees the form but its spirit. That is the fullness of observation, and it comes by concentration. Whenever the artist cannot imitate nature, cannot copy an object exactly, it shows that he lacks concentration.

The next aspect of art is *suggestive art*. This can be divided into two kinds: first an art which directly suggests a certain idea, so that as soon as we see the picture we can see what it says, and the other kind which is expressed in symbols, an art which through a certain symbology expresses a great wisdom. This wisdom is covered; and the more one looks at the picture and the more one studies it, the more it reveals the idea, the wisdom, the thought that is hidden in it. Such art is a revelation. The art of ancient Egypt, of Greece, and especially the art of the Mongolians and of India, was chiefly symbolical art. In such periods, when other pictures were not produced and books were not printed, this was the only means of keeping wisdom alive and handing it on to the coming generations. This was done by the master artists who were inspired by spiritual wisdom and who tried to guide humanity. With hammer and chisel they carved in wood and engraved on the rocks, and left their work in the caves of mountains and in old temples and palaces. When one visits one of these caves where wisdom is expressed in the realm of art, one will find that one symbol can reveal more than a volume of written manuscript. And in this way the sculptures of a temple or of a mountain cave were like a library with thousands of books. The one who can read, can find wisdom there, expressed with great intelligence and wit.

The ideas of the Hindus about gods and goddesses and the different postures in which they stand or sit, the way Buddha holds his hands, all these express themselves in a unique way to one who understands the culture of the spirit.

The third aspect of art is the *crea-*

tive aspect. In this aspect an artist creates a theme and improvises upon that theme as he goes on working. In this way the artist creates wisdom and power. No doubt, the higher the art the less it is appreciated and the less it is studied, and the majority will always seem to be ignorant of its meaning. Nevertheless, the artist who reaches that plane where he can create, can from that moment call himself an artist. Creating is different from imitating or suggesting. In the development of art, imitating is the first step, suggesting is the second step, and creating is the third step.

The fourth aspect of art can only be developed through *meditation*, because it comes like a miracle. It is no longer only art but is a direct expression of the soul. This fourth aspect may be called giving life to the work of art. And the artist who reaches this stage where he can give life to what he creates has reached the highest grade, which is the mastery of art. No artist can reach this stage only by the practice of his art; it is essential for him to know that in order to accomplish great things in the realm of art he needs development of the spirit.

But in order to develop art in the real sense of the word, one need not be an artist, one need not have that particular vocation in life. Whatever be one's vocation, art is necessary just the same. Should not art have a place in one's social or domestic life, in business, in industry or profession? It is because of the division that people have made between art and other walks of life that life has become devoid of beauty. We want to commercialize art, but art is always above material values. When art has to be limited by material values and by seeking the approbation of those who do not understand it, it has to suffer; instead of evolving, it declines.

When the spirit of art develops, this development does not produce anything outwardly, but it does so inwardly. And what is this? It is the *art of personality*. In a real artist a distinct personality is developed which expresses itself in everything one does. In other words, an artist need not paint a picture in order to prove oneself an artist. When he has reached a certain stage of art, one's thought, one's speech, one's word, one's voice, one's movements, one's action, everything one does becomes art. If one is a businessman, or a lawyer, or is in industry, a shopkeeper, or



*The fourth aspect of art can only be developed through meditation, because it comes like a miracle. It is no longer only art but is a direct expression of the soul.*

working in an office or factory, whatever be the position, this art of personality will help. Besides success, one has the magnetism to win everyone one meets because of the art of personality. The art of personality shows in one's movements, in one's manner, in words, in speech, in thought and in feeling. On the other hand, an awkward person does everything wrong. Every move he makes is unattractive. The one who has not yet acquired the art of speaking will offend even without intending to; and in everyday life do we not see people insulting others unintentionally because

they do not know the art of saying without saying?

Other arts cannot be compared with the art of personality. Character is not born with a man; his character is built up after he comes here. Even if a person can call oneself a human being, one has still to know that greater art which may be rightly called a true religion. For there is another grade to strive for, and that grade is the ideal of perfection. And it is those personalities with the this ideal of perfection that have not only taught humanity, but have given an example to humanity by their lives. They came and went—some known, some unknown—but each one of them was accepted by some and rejected by others. None of them was accepted or rejected by the whole of humanity. Yet in spite of this, truth will prove by itself victorious, for victory belongs to nothing else. Victory which comes from falsehood is a false victory; only a true victory belongs to truth, and as one probes more and more into the depths of life and its secrets one will realize

this more fully. Falsehood, whatever its apparent success, has its limitations and its end. For, at every step the false person will feel falseness; and with every step a person takes towards falsehood he will feel his feet growing heavier and heavier when he encounters the truth, while those who walk towards the truth will feel their feet becoming lighter with every step they take. And it is by learning the art of life and by practising it that one is led on the path of truth to that goal which is the longing of every soul.

Finally there is the *art of thought*. The more one activates one's thought, one's imagination, the more capable one is of expressing them in the realm of art. Therefore the beautifying of one's thought is the greatest source of development in art. And when we have understood this, we will come to the conclusion that whether the outer works of art are poetry or music or painting or sculpture, it is the art of personality which is the greater of all arts; but it is an art which cannot be perfected without developing the spirit of empathy. This is the principal and most important thing in life. The deeper our empathy, the greater our power and inspiration will become to bring our art to perfection.

#### THE IDEAL OF ART

Very few in the world today link religion with art, or art with religion. The artist who has arrived at some perfection in his art, whatever his art may be, will come to realize that it is not he who ever achieved anything; it is someone else who came forward every time. And when the artist produces a perfect thing, he finds it difficult to imagine that it has been produced by him; he can do nothing but bow his head in humility before that unseen power and wisdom which takes his body, his heart, his brain, and his eyes as its instruments.

When we study the art of the Middle Ages and the psychology behind it, it seems that the principal aim of the artist at that time was to produce an object to worship. Restricted within the laws of conventionality, having a deeply rooted belief in the sacredness

of the artist's task, he considered his art as the expression of his greatest devotion. And any sensitive person will cer-

No doubt, one can only appreciate this art if one does not compare it with the art of today; as Majnun said, 'To see Leila you must borrow my eyes.' So we must borrow the eyes of the people of the Middle Ages and then look at their art; for in its primitive development there is a mystery hidden which is not reproduced today.

When we think about the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, we notice that the wave coming from ancient Greece to Italy brought new life; yet the art which was once made for worship was then made for admiration. Art rose to great heights, bringing the spirit of classical antiquity into a new realm of expression. Nevertheless, one can say that in the Middle Ages, art was di-

rected towards a higher wisdom, that in the art of the Renaissance it was included, but that afterwards it was produced without it. The gulf that we find between our time and the time when art was in its greatest glory, is because the art of today is without its goal as that higher wisdom.

Painting, sculpture, any form of art, if it is not directed towards a higher ideal must go downward; it cannot rise because there is no ladder. It is the ideal which helps everything go upward. One can quite easily see why people have become more materialistic - the connection with the spirit has been broken.

No doubt, the need for beauty has begun to manifest itself. But how? Not in the form of beauty; it is the *absence* of beauty that is now beginning to be felt. And the result of this is that the artist thinks that there should be a *new* start in the world of art, that a *new* kind of beauty should be found, a *new* expression; but when he tries to find it he mostly misses the mark, for when inspiration is lacking and the work of art is forced by effort, what is produced is mechanical. One artist thinks, 'Everything must be in angles; that creates a new beauty'; and another says, 'No, everything must be just colours, everything must be expressive by itself'; another artist says, 'Everything must be just lines without any detail, everyone should find out for himself what it represents'; and again another says, 'Everything



tainly feel that the art of the Middle Ages has an atmosphere, a feeling, a magnetism which grows day after day.

must remain in an unfinished state; that is very artistic'. In this way it is just like many horses trying to take different directions in order to arrive at a certain place.

There seems to be no ideal today, but the day when the ideal again directs the hand of the artist, art will progress more rapidly, and the promise of the art of the future will then be fulfilled. That something, which begins with a promise of touching the highest heights, of manifesting in perfection has another voice; it has another soul and another expression. Today, the artist is striving for it, his soul is longing for it, but he has not yet found it. And the very reason why he has not found it is that he is thinking too hard. Art does not require hard thinking, nor does poetry or music. True art always comes with ease, with relaxation; it comes naturally. The artist should not be fighting with beauty or struggling with inspiration.

What is most to be deplored at the

present time is the unconscious and yet predominant commercial influence hovering like a cloud over the art of today. There is a general feeling that every month a new fashion must arise; there must be a new fashion in everything; and this inclination, saturated with commercialism, destroys the roots of natural and beautiful art. Life is always new and always old. It is always the same and yet it is always new.

To think that we must forget, overlook, and destroy all the thought of the past is a still greater error. When artists start with this error, always wanting to make something new, then they make commonplace things, things which are far removed from beauty. And the admirers of art, those who buy, do not mind as long as it is new. Most of them only acquire a work of art because it is the fashion, not because it is beautiful; and thereby a great load of responsibility is laid upon the artist as well as upon those who present his work to the world. It is this pressure which spoils the work

of artistic souls, who should have time to think about beauty and who should have leisure to feel deeply. Instead of this, anxiety is thrown upon them, a responsibility is forced upon them to bring out something new. The day when the world of art forgets the word 'new', a new life will come into it.

The combination of inharmonious colours have very often an inharmonious effect on the nerves, on thought, on the mind; and this gives scope to those imaginative artists who are, however, without beauty, without art, without knowledge of life, without any psychological conception of it. It makes their art popular; by claiming that it is quite different from anything else, they can sell their art better. Art should be simple; it should be expressive; it should also be inspiring and revealing. ●

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### BE STILL

*Learn to return to yourself.*

*Become silent: What is happening when nothing is happening?*

*Can you tell the difference between what is happening and how it happens?*

*Can you sense how what is happening arises out of how it happens?*

*Process... and principle.*

# THE FIRST PAINTING ON EARTH

*A Legend from the "Chitralakshana" of Nagnajit*

ANUPAM SAH



*Part of a Panel of Bodhisattva Padmapani, cave 1 at Ajanta.  
Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*

*The art and science of painting was well and alive in ancient and medieval India. The author narrates an interesting legend, proceeding then to talk about some of India's sophisticated texts on the subject of Painting.*

**T**here once lived a King of men, supporter of the earth, wise and famous, versed in the true knowledge of the *Dharma*. During the times of this pious king, the

earth was sheltered with the harmony of religion and the life span of men reached, as is well known, a 100,000 years. At that time there was no sickness and premature deaths were un-

heard of. The elements were kind and the creatures enjoyed merit and welfare. The King undertook ascetic efforts (*tapas*) and having attained the highest wisdom penetrating everything, came to resemble an embodiment of *Dharma*.

There came to this king once, a Brahmin crying copiously. His son had died much before his time and he wanted his son returned to him.

"If you, oh king, with your great magical powers will not grant me this boon, then I shall, even as I stand before your eyes today, throw my life away like a blade of grass".

Thus spoke the Brahmin.

The king summoned Lord Yama, the God of Death, and implored him to give the Brahmin his son back. Yama explained:

"My independence is limited. To return or free him is not within my power. All beings are subject to my power because of the reward that their own deeds (*karma*) merit. Because of time (*kaal*) and their *karma*, they go through fortune and misfortune as the case might be."

The king repeated, "Return him, Oh do return him!". Yama was firm, "It cannot be so."

As passions mounted and arguments got heated, the encounter slowly developed into a fight. The king, powerful and resourceful that he was, let countless rain showers fall powerfully upon Yama. Yama, on his part, sent a fearsome rainstorm, which had the power to release all penetrating wisdom.

King Yama, being overpowered, yelled in rage and swung his mighty

श्वन्दाभुत्तिरम्भमन्ते ।  
क्षमेषवद्गम्भीर्यहन्त ।  
स्माशान्त्रिमास्त्रविश्वामृत ।  
अत्तुष्ट्वेद्यमन्तेक्षिव ।  
क्षमान्त्रान्त्रामास्त्रमुद्दामा ।  
स्माशान्त्रिम्भीर्य ।  
स्माशान्त्रिम्भीर्य ।

club that could subdue everything. The club was like the world-consuming fire (*kalpagni*) and seeing it, the king reached for the weapon that bore the sign of the head of Brahma (*Brahmastra*). At this, all beings and all denizens of hell cried out in terror. Everywhere the great beings (*mahabutus*) anticipated calamitous events.

As Brahma realised that all creation was about to be affected, he, along with the other gods, betook to the earth. As the fighters spotted Brahma, they laid their weapons down, folded their palms and continued their verbal argument. Brahma heard them out and spoke thus:

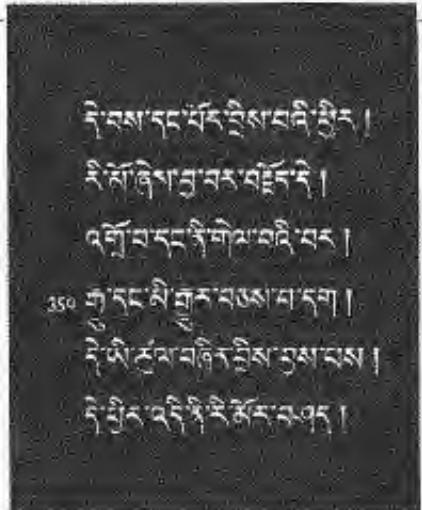
"You, oh King, should paint handsomely, a picture resembling the son of the Brahmin, true to his form, with the help of colours. This will bring you *moksha* (salvation)."

The king painted the boy and the picture came to life. Brahma gifted the living boy to the Brahmin, who with eyes alight like an *utpal* lotus, youthful and bright, bowed to Brahma and received his boy.

Brahma addressed the king, "As you painted the son of the Brahmin, you brought forth into the world of the living, the first picture. Because of the benefit that will accrue to the world from this, you have established your claim to reverence. Today and forever shall this picture gain a place of eminence. The word *chitra* which means 'picture' is being born today."

"Just as the most excellent among mountains is Sumeru, and just as he who soars heavenwards (*Garuda*) is the first among the egg-born, so is painting the first among skills. Just as all rivers fall into the great ocean, just as the planets are dependant upon the sun, just as the *rishis* are dependant upon Brahma, in the same way, oh King, all skills do verily depend upon painting. Go therefore to the God Vishwakarman, and he will instruct you in the characteristic attributes, rules and measurements of painting".

The king went to Vishwakaraman, who taught him the basic tenets of art,



*Maitreya Thangka, Wendu Temple. The dimensions are strictly according to the iconometry laid down in the texts. Photographs courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*

including an extensive instruction on bodily proportions and their measurements. He touched upon, almost in clinical detail, every representational aspect from the sole of the foot to the lock of hair on the brow. All paintings were to be executed according to these tenets. All of this is documented in the

ancient treatise, the *Chitralakshana* of Nagnajit, the Sanskrit original of which is lost. In the medieval period a version was incorporated into the Tibetan Tangyur from which it was translated into German by Berthold Hauer. The text has been ascribed to between 450-650 A.D. It becomes as such, one of the earliest forerunners of the Indian Shilpa texts.

Amongst the other Shilpatexts, dealing with painting, the most important is the *Vishnudharmottara* (circa 5th-7th Cent), the third part (*khanda*) of which, called, the *Chitrasura* is the relevant section. It discusses the origin of painting, proportions, types of physical attributes, characteristics of icons, laws on foreshortening, postures, preparation of the ground, pigments, shading, mood and sentiment, among other things.

The *Samrangana Sutradhara* (11th Cent), the *Aparajitaprabha*, the encyclopaedic *Abhilasitartha Chintanmani* or *Manasollasa* (12th Century) the *Shilparatna* (16th Cent), the *Naradashilpashastra* and the *Kashyapashilpa* are some of the other texts discovered so far. These contain information on Indian painting spanning a period of about a thousand years.

These books are almost scientific works. Painting has been considered by ancient Indian artists as science, a knowledge, a Veda, and was executed with a measure of scientific temper.

The texts are replete with thoroughly thought out rules and systems of classification. Rules for execution of "ideal" forms are thought out, following ancient, sacrosanct traditions. These detailed delineations include descriptions of even the teeth, the tongue, the hair on the head, the carriage and gait of the *Chakravartin*, the over-riding figure of the universal ruler.

These texts have developed after years of practical experience, not just in painting but in allied subjects like music, dance and even physiognomy. Long periods of practical activity invariably precede sound and time-tested theoretical formulations. This is a truth. ●



# CONSERVATION OF MAN-MADE HERITAGE

ANUPAM SAH

*Conservation has come far since that day, only fifty eight years ago, when the word was first applied to cultural preservation. Today it is a worldwide profession: vigorous, technically diverse, but philosophically consistent and devoted to the single aim of preserving cultural heritage. Why is this preservation, this survival so important? Why preserve the things that have passed?*

**H**uman endeavour through the ages has left us amazed and full of wonder. The grace, intelligence and sublimity of this endeavour have taken form through bursts of creativity that some of us are lucky to have seen and



explored. A few of these have been sustained over millenia.

Throughout the universe, in its every aspect, taking form is a creative process, a chance phenomenon, while disintegration is a law.

Man began to understand his own

ingenuity. The wise one recognised it as a gift from Nature. The only wise thing to do therefore, was to create something and gift it back to Nature in gratitude.

Ingenuity was accorded different titles-Music, Dance, Science and Art. Over centuries, these titles became segmented and compartmentalised and today they have become 'specialities'.

Recognition of the ingenuity of man by man, brought in hubris, pride. Arrogance crept in and a feeling of ownership and proprietary domination began to be reflected in the cutting down of trees and forests and the decimation of wildlife natural to the earth. The industrial revolution brought about the breakdown of families and subsequently whole communities. Disintegration of values and ethics became palpable and large scale crime violated securities and human rights.

With so much chaos running amok, it was not surprising that humankind was headed to carve out a brave new world with little or no links with the past. The gap created by cultural apathy was being quickly filled in by monetary empathy. This monetary empathy became the birthright of the rich who got and are getting richer and the moral creed of the middle class most besotted by the rage to acquire. The poor remains abjectly poor. They earn India and her sister countries of the South such unenviable titles from the First World, namely, "Developing Countries", "Third World" and now, "Fourth

*A scattering of colour and the older brother's house is laid to waste by a younger one who did not have the patience to do any better. Ignoring and letting go to waste what our ancestors created for us is much akin to being the younger child in the story.*



*Painted wood-varnish darkened, flaking  
incrustations*

World."

In this poverty stricken scenario, and more importantly in today's culture of "throw-awayism" and "instantism" conservation seems to be a passe'

concept. The excitement of new objects and ever titillating baubles takes us further and further away from the still-centre of wisdom, especially, traditional wisdom.

Conservation, both of nature and man-made heritage is a dammably slow process. But, what of evolution? Did it occur overnight?

A ten year old child sits on the floor, building a house with coloured blocks. Everytime it collapses and scatters, he builds it again. In another corner of the room, his elder brother has made another house with coloured blocks perfectly symmetrical, balanced and aesthetic. The younger child, walks up to the elder brother's house and in one fell swoop, topples it. A scattering of colour and the older brother's house is laid to waste by a younger one who did not have the patience to do any better. Ignoring and letting go to waste what our ancestors created for us is much akin to being the younger child in the story.

Conservation is the youngest of the museum disciplines. By definition, museums have four classic functions, collection, preservation, research and presentation of the collections to the public in the light of their research. Preservation is the most fundamental of these responsibilities. Conservation is the technology by which preservation is achieved.

Preventive conservation is based on the principle that deterioration is not inevitable and 'ageing' is only a



multiplier of known and generally controllable causes. The major causes are environmental: light, temperature, humidity and atmospheric gases. To these may be added mechanical damage due to mishandling and inadequate support; chemical damage due to contact with reactive materials and biological damage by micro-organisms, plants, insects and animals. Most of these factors can be controlled. Thus, the methodology of preventive conservation is indirect: Deterioration is reduced by controlling its causes.

Restoration is the process by which already occurred damage is repaired. Damage can be concealed, broken parts can be rejoined, missing parts can be replaced, and weak parts can be strengthened. Restoration is the activity that most depends on the skill, judgement, and sensitivity of the individual, and it also presents the most exacting ethical challenge.

The conservator follows a comprehensive, scientifically sound, 'total care' approach. The conservator's responsibilities include an understanding of the history, materials and technology of object; diagnostic examination and analysis; documentation of condition through reports and photographs; the design of programs for ongoing care and maintenance; and the execution of a variety of conservation treatments. Because conservation problems cross so many fields of knowledge, conservators may consult regularly with collectors, historians, librarians, archaeologists, anthropologists, research scientists, architects, artists and other museum personnel.

Unlike the artist, who can exercise complete freedom in creating, the conservator puts aside personal artistic inclinations while working on someone else's creation. Materials used by such professionals are of known behaviour and stability. Whenever possible, reversible materials and treatments are employed.

The contribution of science to conservation has been pivotal. In bringing together material research and the ancient craft of restoration, it precipitated the development of modern conservation. While this close association continues to be vital, it also tends to be uncomfortable for the curatorial personnel especially when understanding

field more communicable in order to have a more wholesome and essential

*The contribution of science to conservation has been pivotal. In bringing together material research and the ancient craft of restoration, it precipitated the development of modern conservation.*

interaction and mutual faith.

The applications of science to conservation fall into three broad categories: examination and analysis, deterioration and environmental studies, and research into improved methods and materials.

There is a common assumption that a conservator is required for the care and maintenance of artifacts which are old if not ancient. Nothing can be more wrong an assumption. Conservation begins right from the day an artifact is created. Conservation involves proper packing of an art object for transportation. It is integrally related to storage, display or handling of the artifacts. A painting just bought, improperly



treatment procedures and reading conservation literature. It is the responsibility of the conservators to make their



stretched, will require immediate remedy or else the problem will compound until visible damage will take shape. Conservation begins from day ONE.

A challenge to conservators of today is the induction of synthetic materials in the production of the artists' materials. The formulations of such materials are changed frequently and without notice, and moreover, they are designed to have a limited life. Thus, they have now to contend with not only the natural deterioration of materials in response to the environment, but also with the planned obsolescence manufacturers deliberately build into their products.

Conservation has come far since that day, only fifty eight years ago, when the word was first applied to cultural preservation. Today it is a worldwide profession: vigorous, technically diverse, but philosophically consistent

*A challenge to conservators of today is the induction of synthetic materials in the production of the artists' materials. The formulations of such materials are changed frequently and without notice, and moreover, they are designed to have a limited life.*

*"The rear-view mirror is our only crystal ball - there is no guide to the future except the analogues of the past".  
-Northrop Frye.*

and devoted to the single aim of preserving cultural heritage. Why is this preservation, this survival so important? Why preserve the things that have passed? Do we care what Tyrannosaurus looked like? Do paintings and sculpture really touch our lives? Does it really matter that children play hide-and-seek in our monuments?

It does matter because these are memories of our human progress. The future is a void, and the present, a fleeting reality that slips instantly into the past. Our heritage is all that we know of ourselves: What we preserve of it, our only record. That record is our beacon; the light that guides our steps. Conservation is the means by which we preserve that record. Like the museum itself, it is a commitment not to the past, but to the future. •

*Photographs courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi*

## Hear Hear All Ye Readers!

If THE EYE is to survive, you have to subscribe. Despite many pressures, we have stuck to our principle of not printing product ads to cover our costs. We want to be primarily a subscription magazine.

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You will notice that we have tried to maximise on quality so that our readers don't feel like throwing THE EYE into the trash once they've read it. We hope that you will keep the issues as part of your home library.

Send us your articles and poems or anything that's weighing on your mind. What's all this about THE EYE being a forum for the young adult if you simply don't write?

And your response to the debate page is alarming! Doesn't anyone feel like saying anything anymore? Don't get complacent. Get involved. We need you if there is to be any change in the universe!

We are struggling to keep this magazine happy and afloat. You must come forward and help pass the word around.

Signed:  
THE MICROSCOPIC TEAM.

**S**cience was once an art. Art imbued with a deep under-current of human sensitivity that is congenital, evolved, nurtured, preserved and recognised. It is not an art. It is not a science. It is the reason for their birth.

The drop of water leaves the tap, and strikes the floor, producing a sound. The sound is carried in the form of waves and is heard. This is the Science that we are *conditioned* to recognise. The Science of Descartes who proclaimed all matter to be dead.

Another drop of water leaves the tap behind another door. The moment of the sound, that instant is translated into waves that carry across a distance, vibrating harmoniously in graceful crests

# SCIENCE AND ART TWO SIDES OF THE COIN OF CONSERVATION

ANUPAM SAH

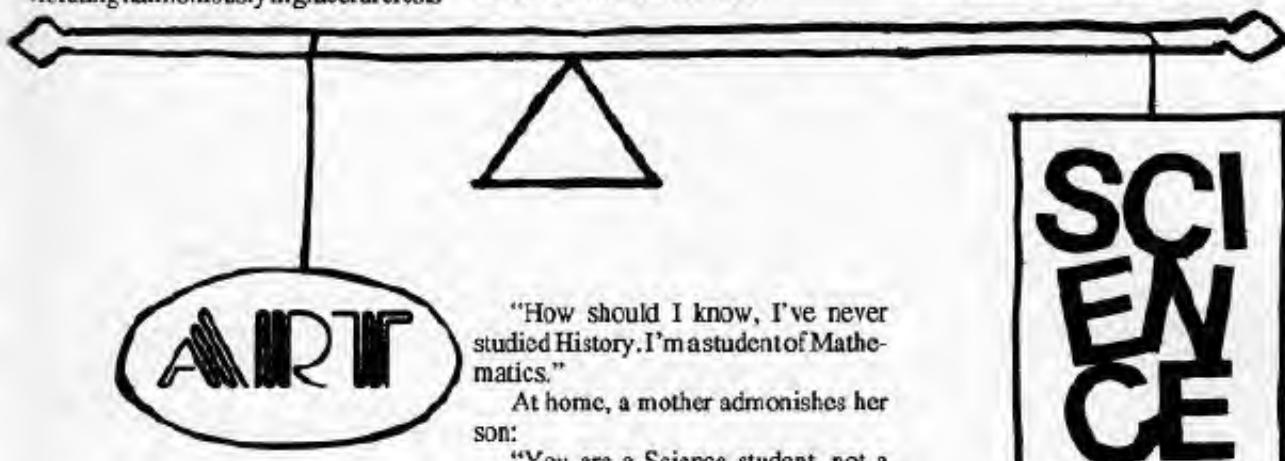
expand and then contract on cooling. This causes stresses and strains.....".

"Excuse us, we do not understand. We are Arts students".

And again:

"Who was it? Did Van Gogh cut off his ear or was it Leonardo?"

Knowledge needs to be rendered more variously hued and only then will it be able to take on the smooth coats of experience in order to be able to translate and develop into a deeper wisdom. One cannot just wait for the hues to reveal themselves. It becomes our *dharma* to traverse and plumb through the realms of nature in order to achieve



and troughs much like the mind's motions. The ears accept the waves, the ear-drum vibrates sympathetically and forwards impulses to the myriad nerves which grace us, with the sheer pleasure of sound. This is the Science we *need* to recognise.

To know about the surface tension of water and the unequal play of the intermolecular forces is to be perhaps a scientist.

To know of the imperceptible skin of water and to float a needle on it as the minute creatures of the earth do, is to be perhaps an artist.

That Science and Art are today viewed as disparate is probably an obvious interpolation of the process of ignorant 'separation' that is so fast pervading the senses of mankind. Man and woman are separate. As are Blacks and Whites. The heart and the mind are separate as is the East from the West.

A typical classroom conversation:  
"You know, metals when heated

"How should I know, I've never studied History. I'm a student of Mathematics."

At home, a mother admonishes her son:

"You are a Science student, not a philosopher. There is no point wasting your time in music or long walks. And no more vague travelling."

These conversations are apparently innocuous and banal, but then, as a verse in the Panchatantra goes:

*"The firefly seems a fire,*

*The sky looks flat.*

*But neither the firefly nor the sky,*

*Are either this or that".*

Beneath the commonplace conversations which we have just encountered, lurks an ominous sense of foreboding. These are dangerous exchanges which carry in their bosom, seeds of perpetration of the isolation of branches of knowledge and wisdom. Inevitably, it will lead to an alienation and diminished understanding of nature and its forces. It will also lead to spiritual superficiality, shallow development, ecological failures, loss of traditional fine arts, making for small mortals rather than giants of wisdom.

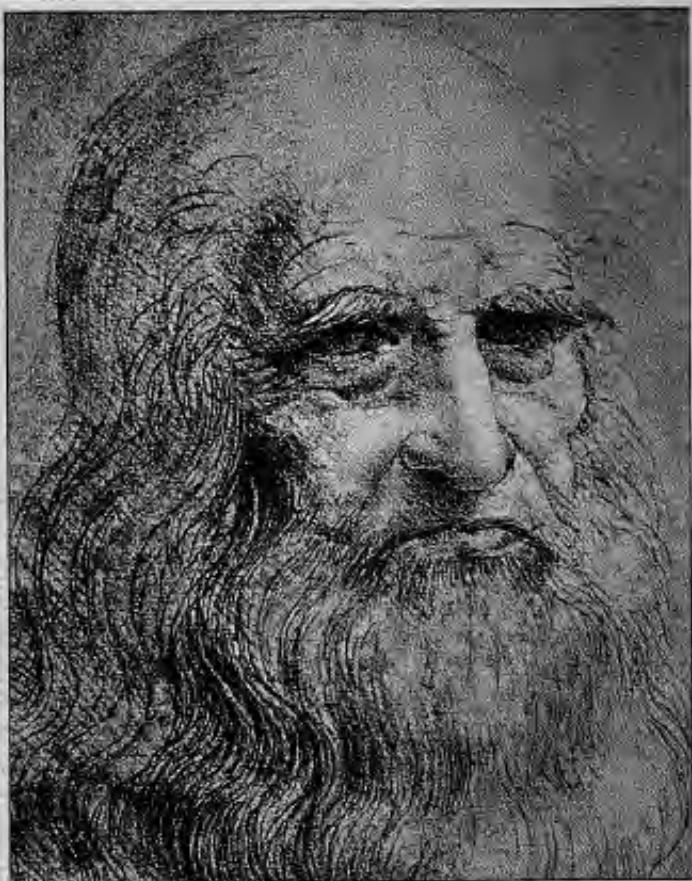
the perfect balance of knowledge.

Conservation of Art is one such journey for a perfect balance. For some, the exploration of the subject of conservation becomes a fulcrum with both the force and the load arms adjusted to optimum efficiency.

A conservator's story:

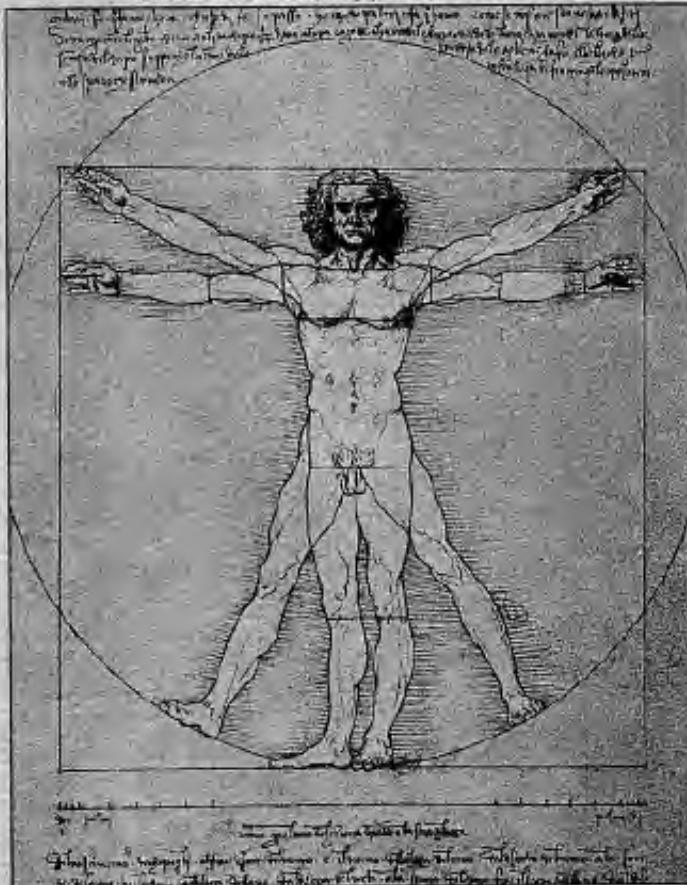
An antiquity, an oil painting, deteriorated, discarded, ignored. She goes back to it again and again. *Sensitivity* and *intuition*. The eyes take the painting in. A *connoisseur's eyes*. They judge it not too valuable in monetary terms. A *competent and honest judge*. The painting will die if left orphan any longer. *Sympathetic*. Something should be done now. *Decisiveness, planning and resourcefulness*.

The painting reaches the conservation laboratory. She unpacks it and spends time genuinely admiring it. A *lover of Art*. Photographs it from different angles and distances. Exam-



Courtesy: Turin Royal Library

Leonardo Da Vinci; self portrait in red chalk.



Courtesy: Academy of Fine Arts, Venice.

Canon of proportions, Leonardo Da Vinci's Man.

ines the painting in various lights and under diverse lenses. *A base in Optics*. She sits down and tries to diagnose the various elements in the picture.

The warping of the frame to begin with. *A grasp of behaviour of wood*. She takes in the sagging canvas. *Understanding fibre sensitivity*. Also the blisters and flaking of paint. White paint turned black, through the understanding of the chemistry of pigments. Notices fungal stains - *familiar with microbiology*. The treatment of the object is suspect, perhaps a later addition. *A sound knowledge of Art History*.

A conservator thus embodies a wholeness in attitude and learning, of Science and Art. The damaged oil painting, tired with the passing of time, is rejuvenated and restored to the freshness with which its originator wished to invest it.

Happiness, pure happiness, unmixed pleasure. This is what comes of such interesting combinations and diverse adaptations. The creation or the *restoration* of a creation, assumes a quality that is as sublime as the flow of a firefly amidst scented leaves on a moonless night.

Leonardo Da Vinci epitomises a singularly human achievement in mastering the basics of the Sciences and Arts. And because he tempered them with the deeper intuitions of the human spirit, his works have a compositeness, and make a statement. Beautiful in content, philosophical in approach and thorough in its scientific treatment is his treatise on painting, *Trattato della Pittura*.

Ancient Indian painters approached their art and depictions of figures through a meticulous study in physiognomy. Painting for them was a Science a Veda, a spiritual journey through the control of technique as was music, dance, sculpture, and literature. The exponent then gets liberated from technique and goes beyond, to merge with the medium into an abstract realm. This is excellence. This is Science and Art.

Anupam Sah, 23 is a final year student of Conservation National Museum Institute, New Delhi. He graduated in Physics from the Hindu College, Delhi University.

Illustration: Anupam Sah.

# CAREERS IN CONSERVATION

JANEY SINHA

**A**re you a person with an aptitude for and an interest in the visual arts, museums, historic sites or rare collections? Do you have manual

art and craft collections, documents and books, archaeological finds, monuments and historic buildings. Many conditions, natural and man-influenced, cause things to age and deteriorate.



*Conservators at work.*

dexterity, patience and a sensitivity to detail? Do you enjoy problem solving?

Are you seeking a career that will combine a variety of disciplines in the arts, humanities and sciences? If your answers to these questions are yes, you may be suited to a career in conservation.

Conservation is a highly specialized and rewarding profession that combines a love of working with one's hands with intellectual challenge. It calls for a lifelong commitment that can bring great personal satisfaction while helping to preserve the artistic and historic treasures of mankind.

In an everyday context, conservation means the preservation (saving and maintenance) of natural living resources: forests and scenic areas, waters, wildlife and habitats. In a different but equally important sense, conservation also refers to the saving and the maintenance of cultural holdings:

Light, extremes of humidity and temperature, corrosive pollutants and accidental damage hasten the breakdown of wood, metal, paper, stone, paint and adhesives.

When we walk through the museums or old buildings, we wonder how these treasures have lasted so many years, enabling us to study and enjoy them today. Art treasures, buildings and special collections have survived because individuals appreciated the significance of these works and cared for them. Preservative action was taken: yearly, monthly, sometimes daily. Preservation-keeping intact that which is unique- in a combination with procedures of examination and restoration make up the field entitled, 'Conservation'.

Conservators are specialists with advanced training in the arts, history and science, who work to forestall deterioration and decay. You may have

heard the term 'restorer' used to designate such an individual. This is an older term that indicates someone who specializes in repair procedures. Everyone has had some experience with restoration. Perhaps it was the repair of a broken ceramic vessel, the plastering of a hole in a wall or the mending of a piece of furniture. Professional conservation of important art, artifacts or buildings, however, involves much more than repair of structures after they are damaged. Preventive measures, scientific examination, maintenance procedures and aesthetic considerations are also areas of conservation concern. As with medicine and law,

*In an everyday context, 'conservation' means, the preservation (saving and maintenance) of natural living resources: forests and scenic areas, waters, wildlife and habitats. It also refers to the saving and maintenance of cultural holdings: art and craft collections, documents and books, archaeological finds, monuments and historic buildings.*

conservation demands lengthy training, continued commitment and a firm pledge to achieve and maintain professional ethics and competence.

In preparing for a career in conservation, you will need thorough, specialized training. Only if you are highly motivated will you be able to follow the difficult but rewarding course of training and practical experience that lead to professional practice. It helps to get an early start.

Long before the establishment of today's degree programmes, apprenticeship training was the basis of conservation study. A student learnt the techniques of trade while working under the guidance of a master practitioner. Today, apprenticeship remains an important part of every conservator's training, whether as an introduction to conservation as part of the degree programme curriculum or as a period of study later in one's career.

As an alternative to the graduate degree programmes, a student may choose to follow exclusively an apprenticeship route, comprised of a series of apprenticeships or 'in house' training positions. This approach to becoming a conservation professional usually takes longer than the formal degree programmes, and the success of the training is determined largely by the initiative and motivation of the individual student.

Apprenticeships, invaluable for hands on experience in treatment and working procedures, often place less emphasis on theoretical, philosophical and scientific aspects of conservation. Moreover, apprenticeship positions vary greatly from place to place, so the responsibility for following a balanced academic curriculum falls to the individual student and the supervising conservator(s). To achieve a complete education, the student must supplement apprenticeship training with readings, courses and research.

Personal reasons or the nonavailability of degree programmes in your chosen speciality may prevent you from attending one of the academic degree programmes. The apprenticeship route is your option. However, it will take longer to acquire the education and to obtain the professional acknowledgement equivalent to that of a recipient of a graduate degree.

Practising conservation specialists keep upto date on new materials, technological advances and recent findings through reading books and journals, attending professional meetings and periodic enrolment in continuing education courses. With a choice of a conservation career, one makes a commitment to continued professional study and education.

By the time you have completed basic studies in conservation, you would have selected an area of specialization. A list of conservation specialities includes archaeological and anthropological collections, art on paper, books, archival and manuscript materials, paintings, textiles, monuments and conservation science and research.

Generally, conservation services are provided either through private practice(individual or group) or institutional employment. Conservators in private practice experience all of the

benefits and risks of private enterprise. Being on their own they have great operational flexibility but little of the in house support ( i.e. maintenance, security, resources of other departments) available to those working in an institution.

Salaries for most conservators reportedly are moderate to low compared to salaries for professionals in other fields that require comparable education.

*Ultimately a person chooses a conservation career for rewards beyond the probable financial returns. The satisfaction of being in regular contact with unique art, artifacts and structures, working in stimulating settings, communicating with professionals who share a similar zeal for their work; and creatively applying one's expertise to the preservation of objects of artistic and historic significance are the non-financial rewards of conservation professionals.*

of artistic and historic significance are the non-financial rewards of conservation professionals.

*Janey P. Shina, 24, graduated in Chemistry from Ranchi University, Bihar. She writes humourous and investigative pieces.*

*Photographs courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.*

## SOME CONSERVATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

**National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology.**

National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi.

- M.A. in Conservation of Works of Art, 2 Years.

- Certificate Course for in-service personnel, 3 months.

**School of Planning and Architecture.**

Indraprastha Estate, JTO, New Delhi.

- M.Arch. in Architectural Conservation, 3 semesters of 6 months each.

- Certificate programme in Architectural Conservation, 10 weeks.

**National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property**

(N R L C), E / 3 , Aliganj Scheme, Lucknow.

- Diploma in Conservation, 6 months.

**National Archives of India.**

Janpath, New Delhi.

- Certificate Programme in Care and Preservation of archival material, 8 weeks. Conducted twice a year.

**INTACH: Indian Conservation Institute (ICI)**

Headquarters: A-1/11, Sector B Aliganj Housing scheme, Lucknow.

Delhi office: 71, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi.

# CONSERVATION IN KERALA

## SOME TRADITIONAL METHODS

T. SATYAMURTHY

*Careful observation, ritual and a close relationship with natural products have brought us centuries old buildings and sculptures intact. For the people of India, they were an integral part of their daily lives and therefore their concept of preservation stemmed out of the nature around them. Traditional methods of conservation brought art and environment together.*

### ABSTRACT

Conservation principles are implicit in certain traditional practices related to temple construction and periodical rituals in temples in Kerala. Such practices deserve study for possible extension to conservation work today.

### INTRODUCTION

While we talk about conservation of cultural property we wonder how these treasures had been preserved by our ancestors all these centuries and handed over to us. Did our ancients take keen interest in safeguarding cultural property for posterity or were these passed on to us by chance? By cultural property, one may mean objects that are preferred in museums or by departments of archaeology, archives and other agencies. There are however numerous ancient objects which are not protected by the agencies mentioned above but which have been preserved for centuries. The following study will show that ancient architects and patrons observed various safety measures for preserving them intact.



*Thiruvikrama temple at Thiruvikramangalam, constructed with granite "adhistana" and laterite wall with thin plaster. The superstructure wall is also of laterite cut stones.*

### SELECTION OF BUILDING MATERIALS

A short survey of building materials used in Kerala monuments will show how the ancient architects of Kerala had taken precautionary measures while constructing them. No doubt, Kerala still possesses a cultural legacy of its own but it also poses specific problems. It is in many ways different from its counter-part in the neighbourhood especially Tamil Nadu. The main reason for such differences may be that the architects opted to select materials that are locally and easily available.

The rich earth of Kerala that produces pepper, hard wood and other products is topped by a layer of laterite throughout the low country. Early archaeological remains in Kerala comprise megalithic monuments like rock-cut tombs sunk mostly in laterite bed-rocks, *kudaikal* or hood-stones, topical, dolmenoid cists, menhirs and so on. These are all made out of laterite

and ascribable to the period between the 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. The finding of granite-cist tombs in the high ranges records the use of granite even in early stages. There is no dearth of evidence of rock-cut granite cave temples in the early Chera history as seen in Kaviyur, Vizhinjam.

Most of the temples of ancient Kerala were constructed with laterite blocks. It is soft at the time of quarrying but soon gets hardened because of dehydration. The colour cannot be precisely defined. Generally it is reddish or reddish-brown in colour. It contains irregular cavities and is extremely porous and not as durable as fine textured granite. Early sculptures so far discovered and rock cut temples in the early phase were all chiselled out of granite. During the peak activity of structural temples (9th century A.D. onwards) the deep-rooted laterite tradition asserted itself, virtually relegating the granite medium into a subordinate position. This is because, as a building material, laterite was easily available and also of a tractable nature.

Further study of ancient buildings in Kerala reveals that generally houses and palaces were built atop a foundation of laterite stone. But temples were constructed over a foundation and plinth of granite base. Most of them were constructed with a granite *adhisthana* but the *bhitti* and *prastara* were of laterite. There are very few examples where granite is fully used from *adhisthana* to *prastara*. (Eg. Neirimangalam Siva Temple, Dist. Palghat). We do not so far come across the existence of any ancient temple built completely in laterite from *adhisthana* to *shikharas*. Invariably the exteriors of the laterite blocks in *bhitti* (wall) portion of the temples were covered with lime mortar. Probably the lime mortar could easily stick into the cavities and pores in laterite blocks. This could form a good carrier for drawing religious paintings. For conservators, the use of granite by the ancient architects in the plinth is an advantage since it can bear heavy weight and can also withstand natural calamities. But in the buildings where laterite is used in the plinth, it is found to be crumbling, unstable, with very little tensile strength. Because it is porous and has cavities, it allows moisture in its superstructure due to

capillary action. Therefore, as a precautionary method, laterite was never used in the plinth of the temples. Even brick was used infrequently in temples. There are some sporadic examples where in the *garbhagriha* or on the *shikharas*, bricks have been employed. However, it never gained popularity in Kerala. Timber is found to be widely used in the superstructures. In some monuments, timber is found to be used even in the

leakage of rain water. Shilpa texts like *Shilparaina* and *Tantrasamuccaya*, deal elaborately with the selection of wood and manufacture of bricks and tiles. Bricks and tiles were manufactured from clay from which all impurities had been removed.

The above care taken by the architects of ancient temples in Kerala, had lessened the burden of conservators. But in the palaces and churches where



*Mattancherry Palace, Mattancherry, Cochin. Granite Slabs were inserted in the plinth to arrest the capillary action.*

*During the peak activity of structural temples (9th century A.D. onwards) the deep-rooted laterite tradition asserted itself, virtually relegating the granite medium into a subordinate position.*

*bhitti* (wall) portion. Intricately carved wooden screens divide the *garbhagriha* from the exteriors.

While thatch may have been the most typical roofing material of early times, tiles were used subsequently. Sometimes, the wooden roofs were covered with copper-sheets. Copper sheets have been nailed to timber-built roofs to protect the joints and stop

laterite has been used in the plinth, we find persistent moisture due to capillary action on the walls. This had damaged the paintings done on such walls, considerably.

However, as a conservation measure granite slabs are to be inserted in the plinth of such buildings. This was successfully done by the Archaeological Survey of India, in Mattancherry Palace and the St. Francis Church at Fort Cochin.

#### TRADITIONAL METHODS

Apart from selecting materials that are less susceptible to various damaging factors, we find various traditional methods adopted in conserving cultural property. A recently discovered inscription from the plinth of the Siva temple at Peruvanam states that *jirnordharana* (renovation) of the Madalappan shrine was done during A.D. 1782 adopting techniques known to the local people.

These simple methods are still in

vogue in Kerala. Rather, some of them are part and parcel of the state's religious ceremonies. They are empirical, based on experience, tradition and sometimes superstition in some cases.

*Jirnordharana* or renovation is recommended at least once in 12 years. During that time care is taken to conserve almost all parts of temples including the bronzes. Worn out wooden beams are to be replaced and preservative coatings with pure sandalwood oil, neem oil and clove oil are to be applied. Fumigation inside the sanctum is done in all the temples daily by creating a smoke of sandalwood, neem leaf etc.

Following the *jirnordharana*, every year, a *samskara abhisheka* (annual cleaning) is done. This is mainly to preserve the sculptures under worship. For extracting accretions from the sculptures, a semi-solid paste is prepared with rice flour and pure lemon juice. This combination is allowed to ferment for sometime and then applied over the sculptures for 24 hours. Then

it is removed and cleaned. By this method it is said that the sculpture is cleaned without any accretions being left over.

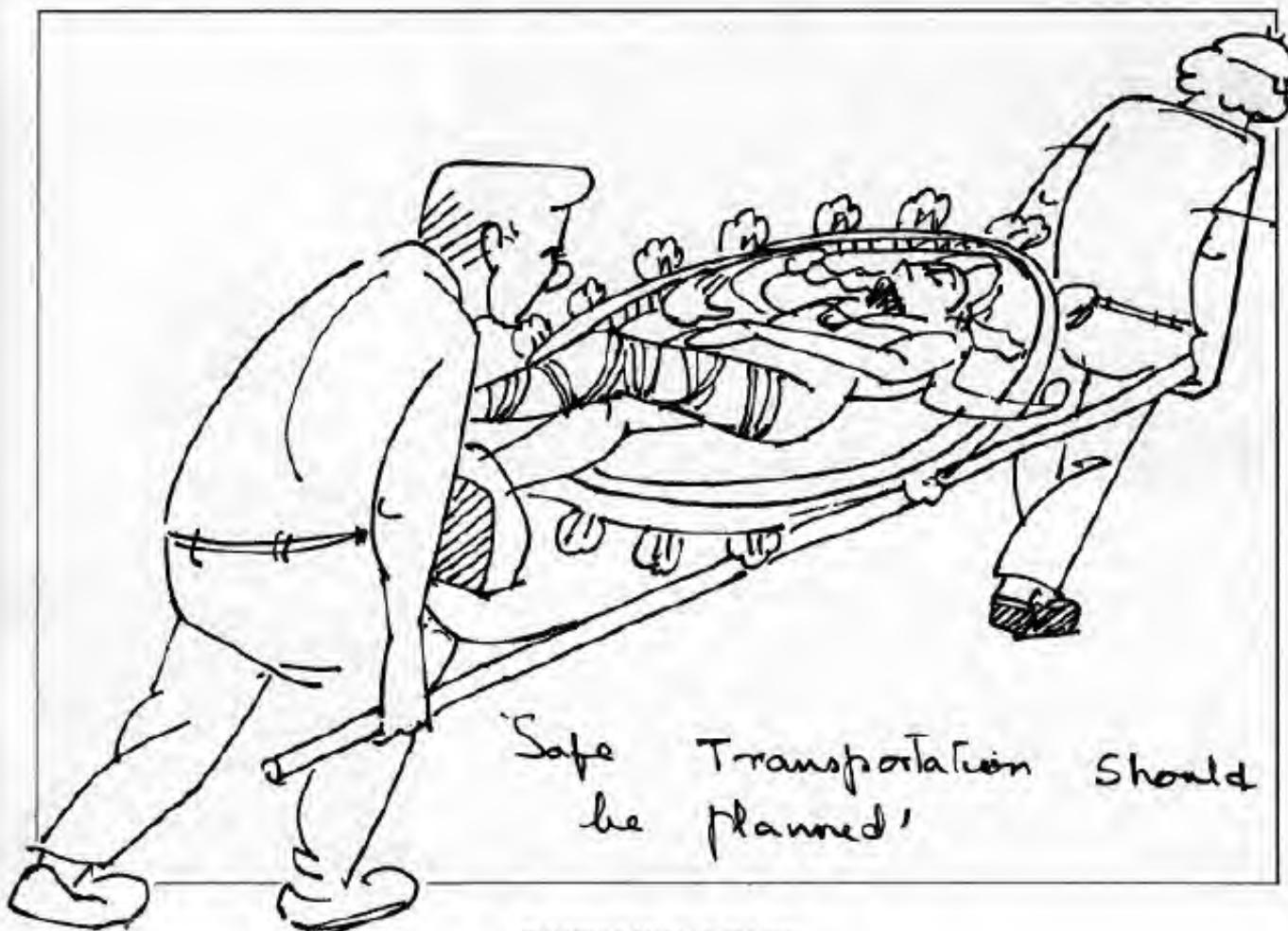
Similarly, the Shiva *linga* has been preserved by temple authorities in their own traditional ways. It is well known that the Shiva *linga* is constantly kept under the flow of water and this may create various problems. On each full-moon day one particular material is prescribed for *abhisheka* with a view to clean the inner sanctum. Most important among them is *annabisheka* conducted during the Kartika full-moon day. During this occasion, the Shiva *linga* is covered with hot boiled rice for a prescribed period. The rice is removed after some time, and then cleansed is done with water. This ceremony will certainly help them to remove the small insects that may have escaped attention. Similarly *pushpanjali* (covering the deities with various flowers) done at frequent intervals keeps the sanctum dirt-and-dust-free.

The bronzes in the temples were

also preserved by periodical cleaning. At least six cleanings (*abhisheka*) in a year are prescribed for preserving the bronzes. Here also a paste prepared with tamarind, sandalwood etc. are applied for a few hours and then removed with the help of herbs. There are bronzes still under worship for hundreds of years without deterioration.

The above observations show that apart from modern processes for preserving ancient objects or monuments, there are traditional methods which passed on cultural property safely to us. The conservators of today may scientifically analyse these methods and pass them on to present day scientists. Ritual has its own place in the conservation process. ●

T.Satyamurthy is currently Director, Department of Archaeology, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.  
Photographs T. Satyamurthy



# TRADITION ON GLASS- THANJAVUR PAINTING

N. HARINARAYANA



*Musician*

*Thanjavur is a town in the state of Tamil Nadu, in South India. Apart from the temples, and its importance as a pilgrim centre, it nurtures a rare art form done exclusively on glass.*

**A** glass painting is a *tour de force*. Simply speaking, it is done on one side of a glass sheet and aims to look good when viewed from the other side. To achieve this, one has to paint the last things first, keeping in mind lateral inversion - the right side has to be painted

on the left. Glass has a smooth, polished surface which does not hold pigment easily. This is one of the biggest odds which Thanjavur paintings has to deal with.

Eshwarlal of Thanjavur is a young, self-perfected glass painter, deriving his earliest inspiration from the beautiful

*kolam (rangoli)* patterns embellishing the portals of households in Tamil Nadu. While studying for a diploma at the College of Art, Kumbhakonam, he was drawn to Thanjavur paintings, especially those done on glass. He decided to make it his metier, excelling in it to such an extent that he is partly responsible for putting it back on the revival trail.

*Here, the exotic conglomeration of bright paint, shining gold leaf and embedded gems lifted them above the banal, delineating an artistic dignity that was unique and distinctly Indian. When the subject of the painting was a deity, it immediately became an object of worship.*



*Eshwarlal at work.*

In India, painting on glass is synonymous with Thanjavur paintings. The nineteenth century saw this style coming into full bloom, influenced as it was by the European glass painting genre. However, here, the exotic conglomeration of bright paint, shining gold leaf and embedded gems lifted them above the banal, delineating an artistic dignity that was unique and distinctly Indian. When the subject of the painting was a deity, it immediately became an object of worship.

Thanjavur paintings were done on wood covered with cloth, mica, ivory and glass. For glass paintings, the first step is to draw the subject on tracing paper, which is then transferred to a thin sheet of glass by a black pigment, the composition of which, Eshwarlal was reserved about divulging. Trade secrets, he said!

Then comes the filling in. Ornaments, flowers, costumes, the eyes, hair-style, and other details. This is the first stage.

The background is now painted and then the face. This is the second stage. Gold, a distinct feature of Thanjavur paintings, is made by mixing gold powder with a special oil and then applied.

Naturally, the sheet of glass used has to be flat and without blemishes. The thickness of the glass varies, depending on the size of the paintings, sometimes, going up to 3mm in the case of big paintings. A 30" by 40" painting can be done easily at the artist's workshop and transported. Bigger ones have to be done at the specific locale required, to avoid the risk of breakage.

Krishna is the ever popular hero of Thanjavur paintings. However, others of the pantheon, like Ganesha, Kartikeya and Saraswati have found their rightful places on the glass. Secular themes have their place too like the bangle-adorning ceremony of Tamil Nadu, which won Eshwarlal a National Award.

Glass paintings developed as an



Above:Dancer

Below>Youth as an angel. A quaint coming together of two cultures

off-shoot of the more widely known Thanjavur paintings on cloth-covered wood. It takes on all the characteristics of this medium and adds some of its own. The sparkling gems on the glass surface, the gold leaf embellishment and the bright pigments have a dazzling quality of brilliance and luminescence highlighted by the glass

itself. As in all Indian painting, the line of the original design is firm and clear. Shading creates three dimensional effects.

As in all genres, certain characteristics have come to stay. The chief deity in a Thanjavur paintings assumes a more prominent cosmic significance making him/her larger than the subsidiary figures. Even the infant Krishna is larger than his mother, Yashoda. A prince in one painting is of the same size as the palatial building behind him!.

The perspective in the painting is brought about by giving surrounding structures like, walls and floors distinct colours. Influences that crept in, especially in the painting of draperies, chandeliers, furniture and certain type of architecture, are very subtly blended with local icons and idioms, so as to make for a quaint coming together of two completely different cultures. Like the paintings of the European Renaissance, the figures are plump and cherubic.

Thanjavur paintings have been recognised as having a very special place in the artistic domain. With some encouragement the art form will continue to stay, but evolve and find more craftsmen. Museums such as the Salarjung in Hyderabad, the Government Museum at Madras and the Prince of Wales in Bombay, have some rare collections which warrants a visit from our art loving readers.

*Prof. N. Harinarayana, retired Director of Museums, Tamil Nadu, is now with the Tamil University, Thanjavur as Director of its Museum. He did Chemistry and then Chemical Engineering from Madras University and joined the Madras Museum as the Curator of Chemical Conservation. He was the head of the conservation laboratory of the Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad.*

*Photographs :N. Harinarayana*

# KONARK

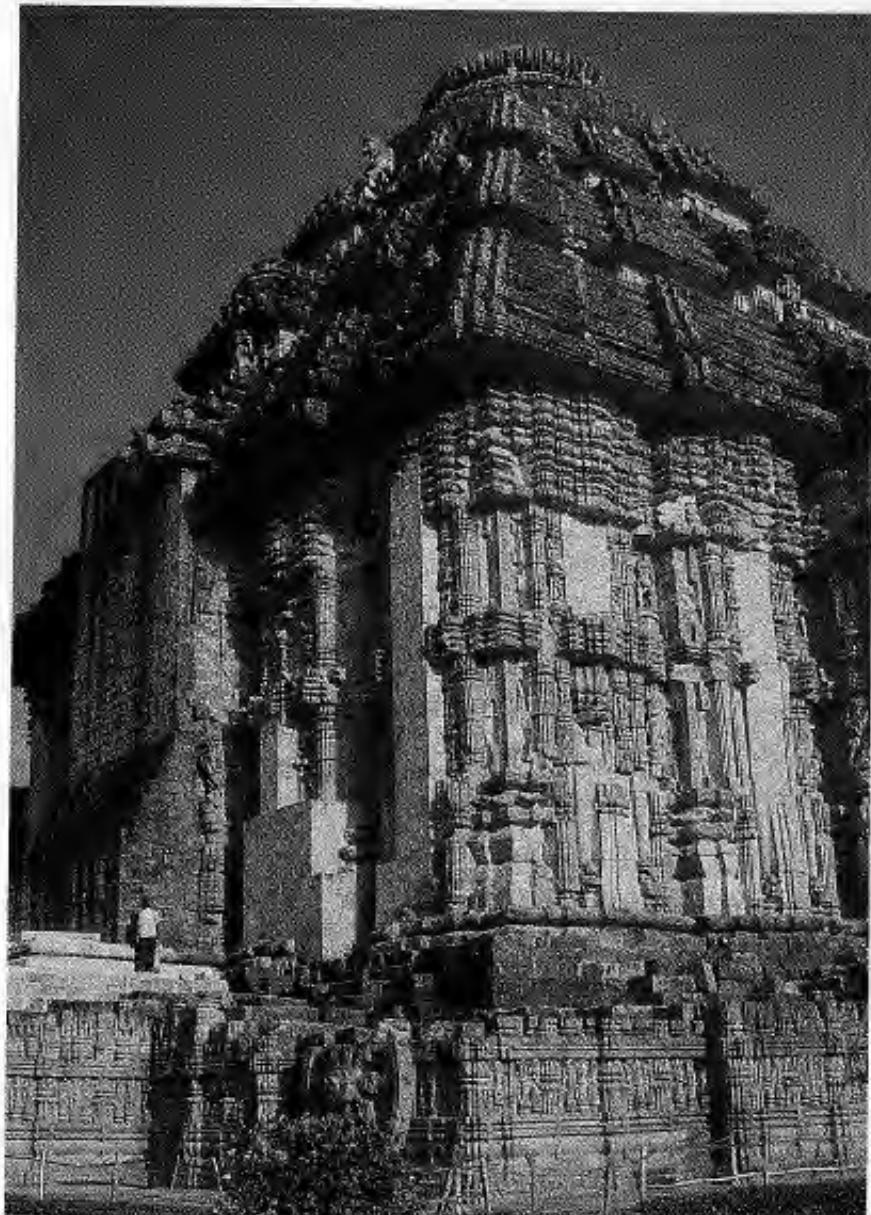
REKHA TANDON

**K**onark. A thirteenth century king's resplendent tribute to the higher self which dwells in man and finds visible form in the brilliance, energy and celestial bearing of the sun.

One wonders who this king was. A master military strategist whom historical records identify as Narasimha Dev I (AD 1238-64), of the illustrious Eastern Ganga Dynasty. He waged war against the Palas of Bengal in the north, the Vijayanagar Kings in the south and

maintained a prosperous overseas trade with South-East Asia. Looking at the map of the Indian sub-continent at this time, his kingdom, Kalinga, was a large flourishing Hindu pocket, against a predominantly Muslim northern强hold.

*Konark conceived of the temple complex with all its philosophic and religious imagery as a horse drawn chariot on twelve wheels and situated it on the shores of the Ganga Empire.*



Architecturally, Konark represents a magnificent culmination of seven hundred years of a distinctly Orissan tradition in temple building. From a "single unit" sanctum as seen in the earliest Shaivite shrines at Bhuvaneshwar (c 575 A.D), Orissan architectural experimentation developed a "four unit plan" comprising axially, the sanctum (*garbhagriha* or womb chamber), *piddha deul* (main *mandapa*), *bhog mandapa* (hall of offering) and *naia mandapa* (hall of dance and music). Each component was replete with cosmic symbolism in plan, elevation and surface detail, conforming to rules of inter-related proportions.

Konark took this vision further. It conceived of the temple complex with all its philosophic and religious imagery as a horse drawn chariot on twelve wheels and situated it on the shores of the Ganga Empire. It was as if, having traversed the seas, the God had finally landed on the most auspicious of lands. All Surya images on the temple show him attired in boots reinforcing his foreign warrior image.

Temple building in Orissa continued into the sixteenth century, showing a steady decline in creativity and skill. The Orissan psyche seemed almost exhausted after the articulation of Konark's matchless splendour.

This monument representing the high noon of Orissan artistry has now a permanent place on the World Heritage List.

*Rekha Tandon, 29, graduated in Architecture from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. She is an accomplished Odissi dancer. At present, she is doing an M.A. in History of Art at the National Museum Institute, New Delhi.*

*Photograph: Vipul Sangoli.*

*There is no such thing as 'Passive Conservation' - we are all involved, and all of us have to take ACTIVE steps to protect what we value.*



A top view of the bare pedestal in the sanctum.

## SUN IN A FOSTER HOME

SOUMHYA VENKATESAN

*One would like to believe that real conservation is not merely to preserve the object, but to retain as much of its ambience as possible which includes that tradition which surrounds and enshrines it. In the following example of Konark, the author examines a very important tenet of conservation.*

**T**here is something wrong here. On the three sides of the Sun Temple at Konark, Orissa, stand huge statues of the Sun facing North, South and West. But the one direction which is most important to the Sun, from which he rises in all his

glory to light the world, facing East, there is no statue. The deep well of the *garbhagriha* is empty - absolute silence. The row of worshippers forever trapped within the pedestal that once held the statue of the Sun, continue to sit there in patient adoration.

Where is it now? The main deity of the Sun Temple at Konark? It stands in lonely majesty within the walls of the National Museum, New Delhi, far removed from the ambience of its own environment. Bright lights, white walls and anonymity. Surya rubs shoulders with various sculptures from different historical periods and regions. Nothing can capture the magic of his original setting.

The casual visitor to the Museum (and there are many), is virtually asked to conjure up an imaginative vision of the temple, the rows and bands of sculptures in veneration of the Sun, the three other statues that are incomplete without the fourth and most importantly, the empty *garbhagriha*. To someone who has not visited Konark, the sun statue at the Museum is nothing but a lovely piece of sculpture. This is not what the image was intended to be. It needs to be back, back in its own place, to fill that empty space and bring the temple back to completion for all those who see it.

Unfortunately, the temple itself is not as it once was. Most of it has caved in. The *shikhara* over the *garbhagriha* has disappeared, and the pedestal there is open to the skies, allowing for the ravages of the weather and the roosting of pigeons. Taking back the sun statue there would be a conservator's nightmare. So what is the answer?

A possible solution may be the establishment of a small museum very close to the main temple to house the Sun God. Just as the horses which once pulled the chariot of Surya have been placed within sight of the temple, even though they had earlier, over time, broken off from the main monument.

The Sun God can be placed, if not on the actual pedestal in the *garbhagriha*, at least in a room specially constructed for the purpose. The sun can then return "close" to home. Otherwise, the act of conservation and the object being conserved loose sight of the perspective. Would we like to see a real masterpiece of heritage becoming merely a proof of a nation's skill in uprooting it from its home and placing it under the lights? Has conservation failed in Konark? ●

Soumhya Venkatesan, 21 is studying History of Art at the National Museum Institute, New Delhi.

Photograph: Vipul Sangoi

# A KORAN FOLIO COMES ALIVE

SANJAY DHAR



## ARRIVAL

It lies on the table of the conservation laboratory. It is an isolated, visibly damaged first page from an early 17th century Koran, the design profusely embellished in Gold Leaf and Ultramarine Blue. The calligraphic script is in Persian and the size, a modest 6.6cmx13cm.

## THE NAMING CEREMONY

It had been received, framed and mounted on silk. It is first given a reference number and then photographed. Photographs are used as reference points during conservation; they also help in recording the extent of damage and serve to avoid any misconception which may lead to litigation.

The folio is then removed from the

*The framer, in all his ignorance, had added to the damage by having given a shoddy backing of brown paper, leading to wrinkling in the folio.*

frame, examined and a 'Condition Report' prepared on the basis of various tests and examinations.

## LE MISERABLE!

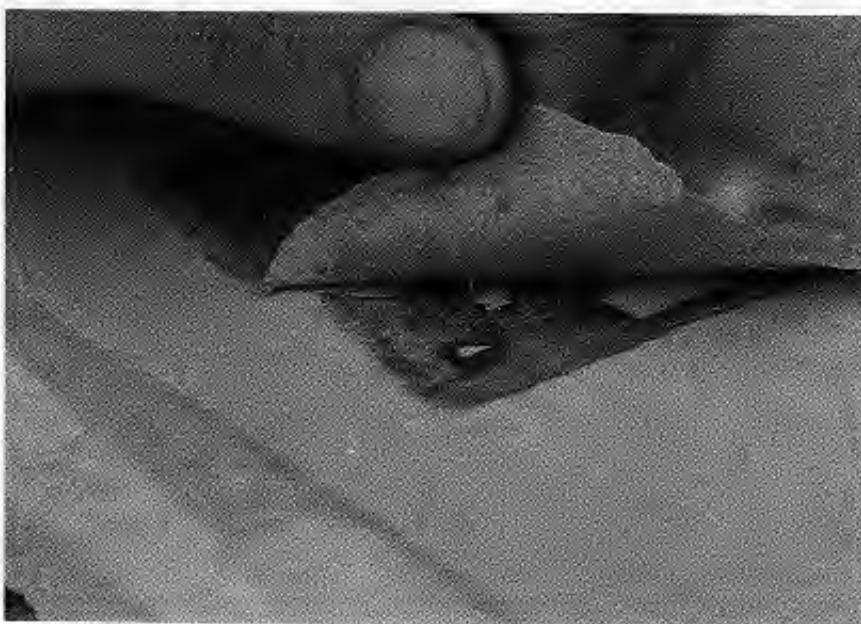
A simple lens helps to examine the surface damage. The folio was found to be brittle to the extent that the slightest careless touch could result in local fragmentation. The blue colour due to its acidic nature had eaten into the paper and so had the ink, in places. [A pH test showed the paper to be quite acidic-(pH4) hence the brittleness].

The framer, in all his ignorance, had added to the damage by having given a shoddy backing of brown paper, leading to wrinkling in the folio. In some areas, mainly along the edges, scotch tape had been used to join pieces which were falling apart. Scotch tape is difficult to remove and leaves stains.

Fungus attacks and microcracks are identified using a microscope. There were cracks in the blue paint of the folio - potential danger! Examination of the folio under ultraviolet light showed no over painting or later additions. Ultraviolet and infra red examination help to determine fakes and X-Ray examination gives clues to the structure, alteration and extent of damage under the paint layers.

Solubility tests on the folio showed that the paint was soluble in water, but not in other organic solvents. The paint had been applied on handmade paper using the tempera technique with Gum Arabic as the binding medium.

These tests are essential to under-



stand the structure, technique of execution, process of deterioration and also to establish safety parameters while using chemicals. Proper testing and examination contribute immeasurably to effective conservation.

Before the actual process of treatment, based on the facts available in the condition report of the folio, the treatment procedures are discussed extensively amongst professionals in the conservation laboratory. The modes of treatment are determined and the possible results at the end of every stage are reviewed and changes outlined wherever required. A dummy folio is made. This is a successful experiment and on that basis, the treatment is initiated.

#### REJUVENATION AND REBIRTH

The brown paper backing of the folio is removed mechanically to reveal a beautifully calligraphed page which had been hidden until now from view. This is reason for rejoicing! This is also the reason for changing the lining method decided upon earlier, as the "verso" (the back of the folio) now had also to be displayed.

The acidity is removed using a non-aqueous method so that any acidity rise in the future could be controlled to a certain extent and the surface accretions of dust and dirt also cleaned. The actual physical loss of paper is filled and a lining made of translucent Japanese tissue paper with adhesive. This makes the calligraphy on the "verso" visible. The lost areas are retouched in such a manner so as to tone down visual differences between them and the intact surfaces. The retouching done with great restraint, shows easily on closer examination.

#### ADIEU!

The folio is then remounted and kept under observation for about four weeks before being sent back to the owner. A relationship had developed between the folio and the conservators and it was not without a tinge of sadness (and satisfaction!) that the restored object d'art left the Conservation Lab.

*Sanjay Dhar, 28 did a course in Art Conservation from the National Museum, New Delhi. He is presently with the Delhi Branch of the Indian Conservation Institute, INTACH.*

*Photographs: INTACH*

# DEBATE

Amphitheatre, Senate, Panchayat and the modern Parliament. Debates have been an integral part of the working of all societies. But what of all of us? Are we not exercisers of franchise, poised to be at the helm of future policy making bodies? Do we not have a role in bringing our voices on to the national forum? Our voices are the national forum. And this Written-Word-Debate is our effort to be heard. This is our movement.

#### TOPIC

### DAILY WORSHIP QUICKENS THE PROCESS OF DISINTIGRATION IN ANCIENT MONUMENTS, AND SHOULD BE DISALLOWED.

We wish to print a fair treatment of the topic. Therefore, the above motion must be debated for or against. Choose any ONE side.

Your written-word-debate must be well thought out, have depth, vision and originality, and above all, make for interesting reading. It should not be longer than 2000 words.

Send in your debate with your name, age and address clearly written in block letters. A brief, six-line bio-data should be included.

The best entries, one FOR and the other AGAINST the motion will be published in our next issue. These two debaters will be entitled to one year's subscription of *THE EYE* free of cost.

Your debate will be printed in our July/August issue.

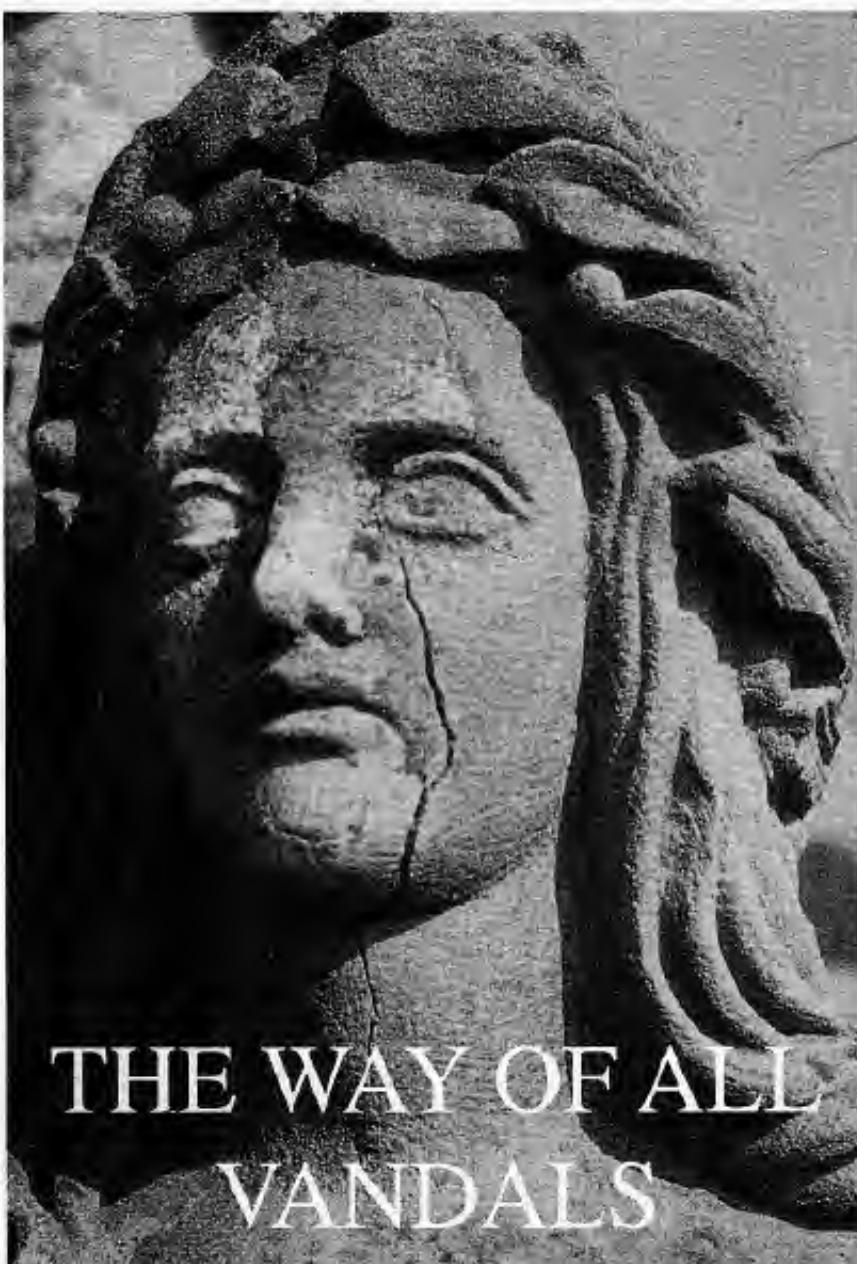
We are looking for quality of thought and language, so keep that in mind.

Send in your entries latest by 20th June, 1992, to: The Coordinator Debates, 143, Golf Links, New Delhi 10003.

Are you a serious thinker? Would you like to see your debate motion debated by others? Send us your debate motion, neatly written, along with your name and address. HURRY!

*Topic contributed by Soumya Venkatesan, student,  
National Museum Institute, New Delhi.*

Good Luck!



## THE WAY OF ALL VANDALS

AJIT SARAN

*Vandal: Wilful or ignorant destroyer or damager of works of art or other property.*  
(*The Little Oxford Dictionary*).

**T**he wilful and deliberate defacement or destruction of public or private property is always an anti-social act and, in societies with an evolved social and civic sense, a punishable offence even if it does not go so far as becoming a criminal act.

Graffiti, the most universal form of vandalism, has become so much a part of city life around the world that it has

come to be viewed with indulgence bordering almost on affection. The New York subway, the walkways under the bridges of Paris and, nearer home, our own roadside walls heavy with competing election slogans or the domes and pillars of ancient monuments scarred with the hearts and initials of city romances are part of a universal urban phenomenon. In some countries, graffiti is even to be accorded

*Our own roadside walls heavy with competing election slogans or the domes and pillars of ancient monuments scarred with the hearts and initials of city romances are part of a universal urban phenomenon.*

*Photograph courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi*  
respectability as a modern art form of the urban youth—an outlet for their pent up creative energy.

What are the range of attitudes which we can attribute to vandalism? All of them have roots in the social conditioning of the perpetrators.

The most generous interpretation can be the prevalence of a distorted sense of fun or bravado but not without qualification. Evident also is a lack of respect and sense of responsibility for one's actions.

But vandalism results generally from a far more deep rooted malaise than a misguided sense of fun. Vandalism is an act of defiance, often the result of economic oppression or a suffocating dominance of either the family, the socio-cultural milieu or the state. In any one or more of these conditions, it may be the only way for the person or group concerned to express their anger and frustration against their perceived oppressors. It may be the only available route to assertions of the self or achieving a sense of belonging, of shared purpose. When defiance can only be expressed through destruction of whatever symbolizes the oppressor, vandalism turns into an act of violence.

While limited avenues of self-expression might be associated more frequently with the poor, the unschooled, the unskilled or the chronically unemployed in our country, it is for the far





Monument walls defaced by graffiti

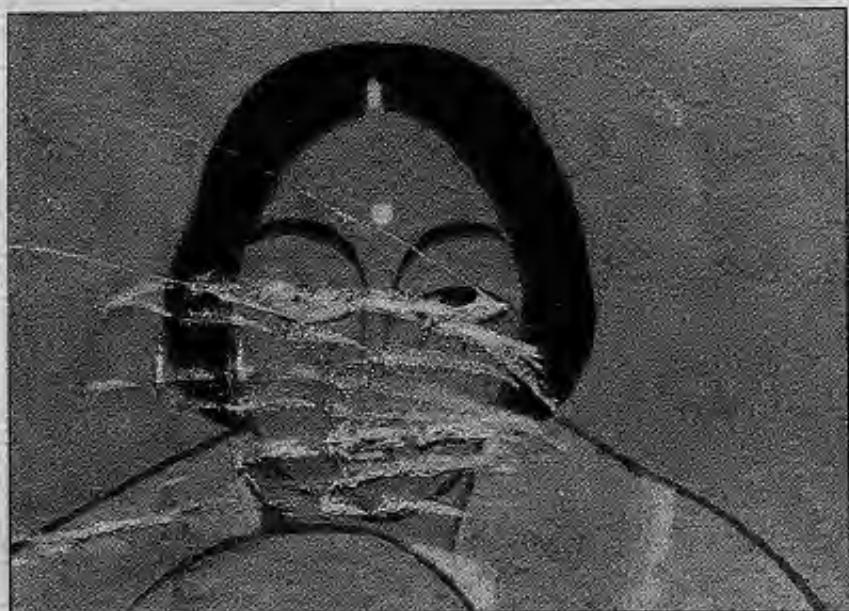
Pix: Shahid Qureshi

*When defiance can only be expressed through destruction of whatever symbolizes the oppressor, vandalism turns into an act of violence.*



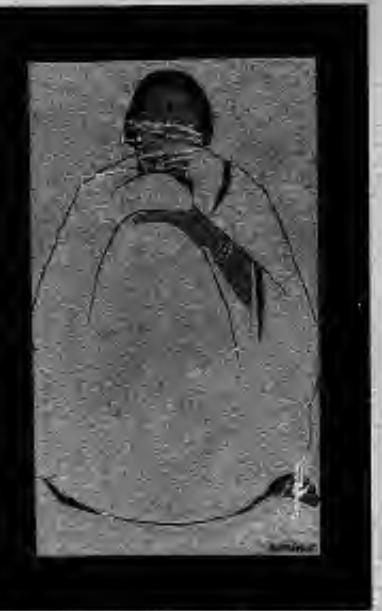
Marble statue showing deliberate overpainting

Photograph courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi



A defaced Jamini Roy Painting.

Photograph courtesy: INTACH



more basic reason of survival itself that they vandalise. Thefts of railway coach fittings, electrical transmission lines and cast iron manhole covers are examples. Politicians, militant unions and the state apparatus in our country

are far more culpable for their brands of vandalism, affecting institutions, productivity and social stability. This comprises the most criminal aspects of this universal phenomenon.

Ajit Saran is Vice-President, Nestle India. He is a keen traveller, an amateur photographer and is serious about environmental issues.

Recently I took my seven year old son to the Science Museum in London. In the section devoted to the evolution of household appliances, I was somewhat shocked to see a range of exhibits which had been commonplace items when I was his age. In beautifully lit glass cases stood the old gas cooker, vacuum cleaner and wireless set which had been so familiar in my childhood. It was a vivid reminder that the accelerating pace of change consigns items to museums, not within hundreds of years, but decades.

Out in the streets, familiar landmarks are not so easy to find. Following the Second World War there was an urge to build a shining new future from the ruins of conflict. This resulted in the creation of a huge construction industry which destroyed much of the organic harmony of former city centres. Ideas from the Swiss architect Le Corbusier were made concrete reality. Following his functionalist dictum, the city became a "machine to live in", and the needs of ordinary people were swept aside under a brave new world of concrete and glass.

In cities like Plymouth, planners and developers knocked down more buildings than the German Air Force, such was the fervour to create a city of the future. They took what is possibly one of the most beautiful natural sites in England and turned it into a soulless monstrosity. True enough, the streets are wide, the housing is adequate, there are theatres, restaurants and shops, but the very air one breathes lacks any form of identity or link with the past. There is little to delight the eye or uplift the spirit, and the main streets have such an identical appearance that the mind becomes disoriented. The quirks of a city, its landmarks, its familiar backstreets, are all absent from the planners dream which has marginalised any aesthetic delight in favour of the clean sweep, commerce and mobility.

Such examples can be multiplied all over Britain, but worse was to follow. Once created, the post-war construction industry became an unstopp-

# PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY

## THE AESTHETICS OF FUNCTION



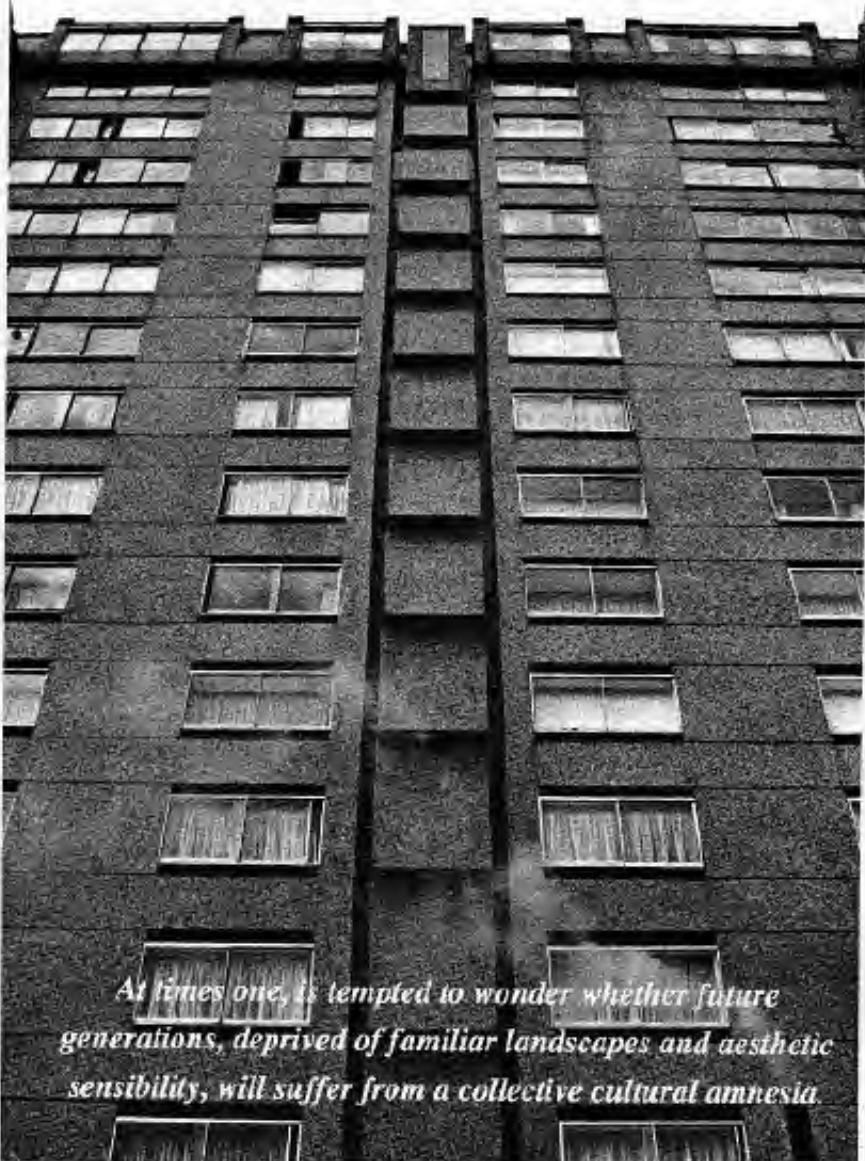
*After the Second World War, human scale architecture was swept aside under a brave new world of concrete and glass.*

*"All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind not merely a service to the human frame" - Ruskin*

pable force. Having ripped the heart out of so many of our towns and cities, greedy speculators then turned their attention to the so-called "grey areas" which in their words needed "development". Tearing down the old terraced housing and replacing it with Le Corbusier's dream of "streets in the sky" yielded gigantic profits. Living communities where people lived and worked amongst human scale buildings were demolished. The corner shop, the pub at the end of the street, secluded places where old people could congregate, and open spaces which echoed to the sounds of children, were all destroyed in this new fervour which gripped post-war Britain. Now many of our city skylines are dominated by faceless tower blocks on windswept desolate sites where life for the residents has become intolerable. Shoddy workmanship, cheap building materials, and the sense of isolation these buildings engender have turned former planners' dreams into a nightmare of social deprivation, crime and alienation.

The lesson took a long time to learn, but gradually throughout the late seventies and early eighties, architects became increasingly aware of the benefits of human scale design. Prince Charles has been particularly influential in promoting a vision of Britain where communal living once again becomes the norm. He is patron to architect, Leon Krier who plans to satisfy the needs of the community rather than inflate his architectural ego with delusions of grand design.

However, this does not mean to say our problems have gone away. For the past thirteen years, a Tory Government largely dominated by Mrs. Thatcher has marginalised aesthetic values in the aggressive pursuit of a free market economy. The dogma of the market-place has created a smash and grab individualism which sacrifices all other values on the altar of immediate profit. Planning regulations have become weighted in favour of the developers' whims and judgements. However, there have been some notable gains. Much of the former industrial wasteland has been refurbished and transformed into communal spaces. The dockside waterfronts of Bristol and Liverpool are notable examples. Sadly the same cannot be said of London's docklands, which be-



*At times one is tempted to wonder whether future generations, deprived of familiar landscapes and aesthetic sensibility, will suffer from a collective cultural amnesia.*

*The bland facelessness of so much modern architecture - such a building could be anywhere in the world. Each structure like this represents a loss of cultural identity. Is standardisation worth it?*

came Europe's biggest building site in the 1980's. This area was declared an 'Enterprise Zone' by the Thatcher Government, and normal planning regulations did not apply. Consequently the scale of buildings which now dominate the River Thames is totally inappropriate. As Prince Charles says, "The new docklands of the 1980's show the triumph of commercial expediency over civic values....A wasted opportunity where indifferent commerce snubs the deprived boroughs all around".

The bitter controversy about the future plans for our cities and towns has masked some rather disturbing facts about the preservation of rural buildings. A recent survey by English Heritage has shown that one in five of England's listed buildings (i.e. those structures of special historic or architectural merit protected by law) is decaying from neglect. This means that 37 thousand buildings and structures are in immediate danger, and 70 thousand are considered vulnerable. Pressure is now being applied in Parliament to introduce a new Heritage Bill which would seek to give adequate protection to these buildings.

In a parody of Rupert Brooke's, it was once said: "there is a corner of some distant flyover that is forever

England". Undoubtedly the worst onslaught to our heritage has come from the motor car. The programme of promoting private cars at the expense of public transport has had dire consequences for both the urban and rural environment. Whole communities have been split apart, buildings demolished, architectural sites ripped up, and ancient landmarks reduced to rubble. Now the Ministry of Transport has pledged a further 12 billion to make hell more hellish in road building schemes which will cut through some of Britain's most outstanding landscapes. New motorways and town by-passes not only destroy our identity with the past, but attract huge faceless out-of-town factory sites and hypermarkets. In turn these new "developments" attract more traffic in a cycle which continuously destroys all links with the past. At times one is tempted to wonder whether future generations, deprived of familiar landscapes and aesthetic sensibility, will suffer from a collective cultural amnesia.

One day my son will probably take his children to the Science Museum. Will he look back with a sense of nostalgia on memories of the past? Or will he view the exhibits with regret that his cultural identity can no longer be found in the outside world, but has been finally consigned to the clinical atmosphere of a glass case? ■



*The curves and ornaments of this graceful Regency terrace in Brighton are a delight to the eye and an upliftment to the spirit.*

*Malcolm Baldwin is a gifted teacher, writer and a dedicated environmentalist. Born in the U.K., he has a B.Ed degree from the University of Sussex. He has worked in Theatre and as a film editor mainly for the BBC T.V. He has been cameraman and director for several BBC productions. He is deeply committed to organisations such as Green Peace, Friends of the Earth, Environmental Investigation Agency and has produced Environmental educational material. He is currently employed with the Cornwall Energy Project.*



## RESURGENCE

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One morning while I was sitting in the hut where Mahatma Gandhi lived, I tried to absorb its spirit and its message. There were two things which impressed me greatly. One was its spiritual aspect and the other was its amenities. I tried to understand Gandhi's point of view concerning the building of the hut. I very much liked its simplicity, beauty and neatness. Since the house which has been provided for me in Mexico is in many ways like this hut, I could understand its spirit. The hut has seven kinds of places. As you enter, there is a place where you put down your shoes and prepare yourself physically and mentally to go into the hut. Then comes the central room which is big enough to accommodate a large family. The third space is where Gandhi himself sat and worked. There are two more rooms, one for guests and the other for the sick. There is an open verandah and also a spacious bathroom. All of these rooms have an organic relationship with each other.

If rich people came to this hut, they might laugh at it. When I looked from the point of view of a simple Indian, I could not see why there should ever be a house bigger than Gandhi's hut. The hut is made of wood and mud. In its making, it is not a machine but human hands which have worked. I called it a hut but it was really a home. There is a difference between a house and a home. A house is where people keep their furniture and belongings. It is meant more for the security and convenience of the furniture than for the people themselves.

The house in Delhi where I stayed had many conveniences. The building was constructed from the point of view of these conveniences. It was made of cement and bricks and it was like a box where furniture and other conveniences

# THE MESSAGE OF GANDHI'S HUT

IVAN ILLICH

*Gandhi's hut is a home rather than a house.  
The spirit and beauty embodied in that hut  
are possible and desirable for us all.*



could fit in well. We must understand that the furniture and other articles that we go on collecting all our lives will never give us inner strength. These are the crutches of a cripple. The more such conveniences we have, the more our dependence on them increases. On the other hand, the furniture I found in Gandhi's hut was of a different order: there was very little likelihood of becoming dependent upon it. It is like our dependence upon hospitals for the health of the people and upon schools for the education of our children. Actually the number of hospitals is indicative of

the ill health of the people and schools of their ignorance. Similarly, the multiplicity of possessions minimizes the expression of creativity.

Unfortunately, the paradox is that those who have most are regarded as superior. Would it not be considered odd if those who use artificial legs were to be considered superior? While sitting in Gandhi's hut I was grieved to ponder on this perversity. People who want to have a place bigger than this hut where Gandhi lived are poor in mind, body and life style. They have little relationship with nature and little closeness with their fellow human beings.

When I asked planners why they did not understand the simple approach which Gandhi taught us, they said that Gandhi's way was very difficult and that people would not be able to follow it. How is it that such a simple principle is not being understood? In fact the common people fully understood the principle of simplicity. It is only those people who have some vested interests who refuse to understand.

Gandhi's hut connotes the pleasures that are possible through being at par with Indian society. We must understand that unnecessary articles and goods that people possess reduce their power to imbibe happiness from the surroundings.

This hut of Gandhi demonstrates to the world how the dignity of the common person can be elevated. It is also a symbol of the happiness that we can derive from practising simplicity, service and truthfulness. ●

*Ivan Illich's latest book is  
In the Mirror of the Past, published by Marion Boyars.*

*Courtesy: Resurgence Magazine*

# THE ARCHITECT AND THE ZEITGEIST

A.G. KRISHNA MENON

*To capture the zeitgeist, the spirit of the age, has been the particular agenda of modernism. As architects, we consider ourselves 'modern' to the extent that we address this objective in our professional practice.*

What is the *zeitgeist* of contemporary India? The expanding industrial-urban economy or the pervasive reality of inadequate resources? The melting pot of the modern nation-state or the persistence - indeed resurgence - of fundamentalism, thought to be submerged, or at least diluted, in the

pursuit of modernity? Or is it something else, not an existing condition but the search for a better world? Suffice to say that it has meant different things at different times.

In the Post-independence period it was quite natural for the Indian architect to adopt the "International Style", as it reflected the new, 'modern' spirit which was in keeping with the general mood of the times. The situation was perhaps analogous to the mood in Eu-

rope after the First World War. In any case, architecturally speaking, *Esprit Nouveau* was decisively established in India by the Master himself, and was reinforced by the likes of Louis Kahn and the reformist agenda of the post-independence generation of Indian architects.

However, by the 1960s, the mood had changed, both in terms of the general direction of growth adopted by the government and in the agenda of architecture being practiced at that time. This coincided with the wide-spread disillusionment with the International Style, and in India the *zeitgeist* became the search for a regional 'Indian' identity. Today, with hindsight, we can question some of the assumptions that predicated this search: Whose identity? - the architect's? - the client's? Which identity? - 'national'? - 'regional'? Such specific questions were not asked then or at best they did not determine how architectural discourse developed, perhaps because the questions raised then emanated from the Orientalist agenda and not from realities on the ground. Indian architects too were part of this process, partly be-



Bhubaneswar: New Development dominating the old.



*What is the zeitgeist of contemporary India? The expanding industrial-urban economy or the pervasive reality of inadequate resources? The melting pot of the modern nation-state or the persistence - indeed resurgence - of fundamentalism, thought to be submerged, or at least diluted, in the pursuit of modernity?*

construction-contract procedures are bypassed. They are most effective in new construction when the architect acts like a developer and mediates the gray area of architectural ethics. Unfortunately the situation at present is that even if the architect is willing to resolve this dilemma by undertaking the role of the creative developer, resistance from vested interests and Government audit loom large as formidable obstacles. The project at Chanderi for example, has been stalled on this account.

Working with craftsmen inevitably leads to the discovery of the viability of traditional building materials and technologies. Used intelligently this is almost always the cheaper and faster option for construction in any region of the country. It is however, not wise to be dogmatic about the use of a particular traditional material or construction practice because there has indeed been a considerable erosion of tradition and depletion of natural resources in certain regions of the country, and the steady intrusion of the 'PWD' culture has perhaps accelerated this process. In such areas it would be quixotic to reverse the trends, but what conservation architects can still profit from is to view the glass of water as one-quarter full rather than three-quarters empty!

It is almost always possible to still resort to some traditional practices in any part of the country. Even in urbanized places like Delhi this is true. Even where wood is scarce and one has to replace it with steel joists, it is still possible to follow other traditional building construction practices for the remaining works. This hybridization is often resisted by architects because the practice appears to be 'false', but one realizes that seen from the perspective of the craftsmen, it is not so, and their practice does not prohibit the incorporation of any innovative practice as long as it results in overall benefit for the client, building or builder. Thus, the onus is on the architect to re-examine the 'high art' definition of 'false' because traditional practices un-self-



The historic Kathmandu Darbar Square surrounded by modern development

***Working with craftsmen  
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traditional building materials  
and technologies. Used  
intelligently this is almost  
always the cheaper and faster  
option for construction in any  
region of the country.***

consciously incorporate inconsistencies as a normal process of evolution. It is evident that what is at issue in this dialogue between tradition and modernity is modernism's all-or-nothing approach to the transformation of traditional environments and not necessarily the intrinsic nature of the hybrid construction process being followed.

In this manner the practice of conservation has enlightened the interstices in both traditional and modern building practices. Undoubtedly even in the mainstream of the profession, architects have begun to question the rules of modernism and have begun perhaps to move towards a similar interpretation of their craft as has the conservation architect. The practice of conservation has however demonstrated that such enquiry can as easily derive from the specific context and, possibly, prove to be more indicative of the *zeitgeist* than the incestuous debates going on in international fora.

One of the specific contexts that has proved a fertile area for research has been the traditional house form. Evolving new spatial typologies from traditional housing patterns has so far been the significant achievement of Indian architects. The practice of conservation is explicating the nuances in this approach. For example, contrary to the rhetoric of some of the leading practitioners there is no pan-Indian house type in architecture. The ubiquitous courtyard has many structural expressions. Even in Gujarat it has been pointed out that there are at least three different typologies. There is an unwitting allusion to political imperatives of a nation-state amongst modern architects when they speak of an 'Indian' identity. For better or for worse (depending on one's perspective) architects working in conservation projects have articulated and reinforced sub-regional identities thus infusing the mainstream with wider and deeper meaning in their search for identity.

This has also opened the floodgates of 'style' in Indian architecture. Mannerism and historicism were never rejected in Indian architecture, perhaps because of a compressed historical evolution. Thus an ambiguity exists in architectural theory and practice in this regard and one notices an irrational taboo operating which permits the adoption of certain traditional spatial

cause the more visible and vocal ones were trained in the West. Thus, they sought the Indian identity through selectively 'invented' or 'transformed' aspects of the heritage in a process that has been better recorded and explicated in another discipline, the writing of history. One could say that theirs was the view of an outsider looking in. I will not quibble here about the problems inherent in that vision - and there are many - because it is extraneous to our discussion. But I will argue, that our more complex world, and the reality of operating in a plural cultural environment is beginning to dawn on us even as the world is shrinking through the communication revolution. It appears

that the search for singularity and simultaneity in our architecture and urban environment is perhaps the elusive *zeitgeist*. Compromise and syncretism appear to be the mode. The Indian architect has apparently attempted to escape this confusing state of affairs by aligning with the expository clarity of Western architects working from within their own societies and cultures. In any case it must be recognized - and this is the theme of the discussion - that the situation is changing as we slowly piece together the complex picture of our society; though the directions are not fully charted as yet, the prospects are promising.

A major catalyst for this change in values and perception amongst architects has been the heritage conservation projects commissioned by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

The practice of conservation in India was already well established and was over a hundred years old. Buildings of historic importance were maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) or its counterparts in the states, who had, under the circumstance of severe resource constraints, maintained

a reasonably good track record. However, it was a strange fact that their work was carried out by archaeologists who had no formal architectural training, whereas in the West, including

in Conservation until 1986 when the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, established its Centre for Conservation Studies. This centre now produces about half a dozen conservation architects a year.

As a result of these initiatives there has been a steadily growing band of conservationists in India with an architectural background. This is beginning to have an impact on both the practice of architecture and on conservation.

The involvement of architects in the heritage zone projects was therefore, necessary even in terms of the practical necessities of the project sites, and has resulted in the development of a methodology for

viewing monuments in their physical, social and cultural environment. This is neither a new nor a revolutionary perception but it is not the way the ASI worked. It requires of the coordinating architect, a process of complex decision-making and a multi-disciplinary approach, one in which they are often required to reconcile the seemingly contradictory imperatives of the academic-scientific approach to conservation on the one hand and the socio-economic needs of the people who give them significance and meaning on the other. In the context of the conservation profession, this realization was slow in coming.

The approach to conservation should highlight the development potential of the heritage-zone rather than emphasising restrictive practices required to preserve the authenticity of its monuments. In fact, the very notion of authenticity in the Indian context calls into question the conservation philosophy practiced by the ASI.

In India, monuments and other historic buildings were traditionally restored or rebuilt by local master-masons as and when necessary, to counter the effects of wear and tear or to meet



*Varanasi: The magnificent ghats facing the pressures of modern development*

***There has been a steadily growing band of conservationists in India with an architectural background. This is beginning to have an impact on both the practice of architecture and on conservation.***

Britain, from whom we inherited this 'tradition' the architect was and is an important member of the conservation team, often in a pivotal decision-making capacity. Archaeologists in India are, typically, civil-engineers and historians, and though they are familiar with architectural history, they have no understanding of architectural methods and devices. This unfortunate lacuna is reflected in the way they treat monuments: as museum pieces rather than as part of the living fabric of society.

Perhaps the problem derives from our educational system. No School of Architecture in India offered a course

the requirements of new patrons. Very rarely would such practices be aimed at preserving the original form as defined by the ASI. Thus, among Indian craftsmen, preservation was the exception, and reconstruction or additions to monuments was the norm. Such craftsmen still exist on the Indian scene, though their presence is not easily acknowledged by the modern Indian architect. Thus, one of the earliest insights that any conservation architect stumbles upon is akin to the re-discovery of the wheel: that contrary to popular belief, craftsmen do exist and traditional forms of building are still in common use.

Almost invariably, those areas of cities which form the heritage zone are their cores, and the development of these areas has generally been bypassed by modern planners perhaps due to its complexity and the affinity planners have for new development. Yet these historic cores have had to bear the brunt of tremendous population influx and commercial growth. That they cope, often with still discernible grace, is itself remarkable and it is due almost entirely to the availability of local craftsmen to cater to the building needs of these areas. It is the intrusion of contemporary forms and construction methods that is often the source of the problem. One soon realizes that change itself is not problematic; it is the manner and mode of change that must be mediated. These areas need to be upgraded and renewed, not frozen in their present state or razed and recast. This applies to both monuments and the urban fabric itself. The most appropriate strategy for achieving such an order of change appears to be one that involves the local people and uses traditional materials and technology. Inevitably, therefore, studies after studies recommend the involvement of local craftsmen in the development process.

*Studies recommend the involvement of local craftsmen in the development process. This makes both practical and economic sense. However, it is a situation that our architectural education and practice have not taught architects to handle.*



Chanderi: The historic fabric being destroyed by formless outward growth

This makes both practical and economic sense. However, it is a situation that our architectural education and practice have not taught architects to handle. They need to work as partners with craftsmen, because their combined skills are necessary to conserve the architectural heritage.

The potential of working with craftsmen and the range of visual expression possible through their complementary involvement in development is apparent once it is mooted. The appropriateness of 'fitting' new buildings into their surroundings under these circumstances soon becomes self-evident. Visual continuity is almost always an important part of traditional cities, and any intelligent architect working with crafts-

men realizes that this does not necessarily mean stylistic homogeneity. Working with craftsmen, one also learns the meaning of the term 'sense of place', a term that is generally missing in the vocabulary of modernism. Some examples of the use of traditional craftsmen and construction techniques can be seen in the restoration of the Raj Mahal, Chanderi, the Dharamshala and Pravachan Hall at Ujjain and the Ghats at Varanasi, all of which are currently in progress. There are of course, many other examples, but what I would like to point out is that in each case we can argue about the varying degrees of 'invention' in the same manner as we critique a modern building. But what remains beyond argument is that these interventions 'fit' into the locale and give delight to the user.

Working with craftsmen also forces the architect to reassess two principles of modern architecture - first they come to terms with the anathema of modern architecture: the use of ornamentation and decoration in buildings. Decoration is almost always aesthetically or symbolically

necessary in traditional architecture. They give visual delight, and in the Indian context, tremendous user satisfaction. It is seldom expensive. It appears to be expensive only when used as a redundant element in a foreign construction process where it is merely added on in a hierarchical traditional network of design decisions. But when craftsmen are employed as master-masons, decoration is an invariable 'bonus', not an additional cost. The practice of the modern Indian architect has gone against the grain by eschewing ornamentation, and this has impoverished both the building and the craftsmen.

Second, the craftsman can be used as a master-mason only if the modern

typologies but does not permit a similar dialogue with architectonic elements of traditional buildings. Such arbitrary taboos of course, completely discount the colonial experience and the larger historic perspective which views the genius of Indian architecture (and civilization) as its syncretic nature. But Indian architects have always been uncomfortable with that particular period of our history and the characteristic nature of our architectural development. Thus they have discarded the possibility of considering the syncretic nature of our tradition as the elusive *zeitgeist* even before it has had a fair hearing. Thus one can understand modernists blanching at this prospect but working as a hands-on conservation architect one has inevitably come to acknowledge the unthinkable, that is, that the fear of using traditional architectonic elements in our contemporary architecture is more the fear of fear itself than an apprehension based on any sustainable logic. Of course, the problem of any approach towards a historicist architecture at present is further compounded by the unfortunate timing of the post-Modernist hegemony in contemporary architectural thought and

practice. The conservation architect realizes that historicism is rejected for the wrong reasons.

What I have been trying to illustrate is that the role of the architect in conservation has been a positive and mutually beneficial relationship to both professions. Perhaps we can now understand why the modern architect's obsession with *zeitgeist* has led to false and inappropriate choices. What our experience in conservation has also revealed is that it is appropriate to localise the context, rather than nationalize or internationalize it. No wonder the Indian post-modernists (like their international counterparts) have to resort to wit and irony because their agenda reveals an understandable uneasiness with venturing into what was once, aesthetically speaking, the local context or territory. History and architectural types had local specificity. Humour is a way of distancing one's work or insulating it from the arbitrary way they are being located in the local environment: architects can afford to chuckle in their professional journals, the local people have to learn to live with the joke. All this can change if the practice of the profession were to be-

come more conservation oriented and derive their context directly from the locality instead of 'alluding' to it.

In attempting a more conservation-oriented architecture (and consequently attempting a more development-oriented conservation) one is turning away from the heroic mode that has dominated architecture. It was a seductive and heady brew and it will no doubt continue to attract adherents. It loaded architecture with 'ideology' which became the pre-condition for performance on the assumption that such abstraction made the architect and architecture more intellectually weighty. It is time we re-examined this proposition and the role of the architect in conservation will prove to be salutary in this exercise. ●

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*Photographs: A.G. Krishna Menon*



- PRAVIN BADHIA

# A PEOPLES' MOVEMENT

## CONSERVATION SOCIETY, DELHI

NARAINI GUPTA

*Though the induction of professionals and specialists in the field of conservation is a recent phenomenon in India, the involvement of voluntary agencies is much older and has already made a significant impact. On many occasions it has been the masses who have risen with zeal in protection of their historic past. This emotional link with one's heritage is a fact which professionals cannot easily afford to overlook, especially as it seems to point to a need for stability and identity in a rapidly metamorphosing environment.*

*There is increasingly a basic belief that it is imperative that we inculcate a respect for our heritage in our daily lives before we lose the opportunity to utilise this vast resource in the successful implementation of farsighted development strategies*

In 1981, as an expression of concern over the ever increasing civic problems of Delhi, Kamaladevi Chaitopadhyay, the grand old lady of the handicrafts revival movement in India, invited like-minded citizens to form an 'environment group'. Amongst these were some who pursued the pressing need of Delhi's historic monuments for attention and

affection. While the majority felt this to be definitely a low priority area, a 'monuments sub-group' was finally composed. It is that subgroup of three members that has snowballed today into the Conservation Society of Delhi with nearly 100 members. Purely a voluntary citizen's action group, CSD aims at the creation of a highly effective



Hawz Khas

pressure group by involving people with their city. This means, re-acquainting them, not only with the physical remnants of their heritage, but also with that intangible ethos that gives substance to so much of our present cultural environment.

### TOURISTS IN THEIR OWN CITY

The citizens of Delhi probably surpass those of any other metropolis in their ignorance of much of their city. Low on funds but high on enthusiasm, CSD seeks to show Delhiwallas their city through the lost art of walking through its streets. Sixteen Sundays every year, from September to March, they spend 2-3 hours walking through the historic areas of Delhi—all the way from twelfth century Lalkot in Mehrauli (South Delhi) to twentieth century 'Lutyensabad'. The 'guides' belong to different professions, one of the most popular being a teacher of economics. Attendance varies from between 15-40 persons, sometimes whole families come; there are interruptions and tangential discussions as participants realize they are looking at buildings for the first time in a neighbourhood they have, perhaps lived in for years.

### RECORDING THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

CSD has also put in a lot of effort in the making of audio-visuals which carry the message of the urgent need for conservation. The cost of the raw film has been met by grants from the Department of Environment and the Zaheer Science Foundation. To date, the following AVs have been recorded: 'The Future of Delhi's Past', 'Mehrauli, the First City of Delhi', 'Lal Quila, Citadel of the Seventh Delhi'. These photographic records and scripts, together with taped interviews with people who have lived a long time in Delhi (the interview are being done by the editors of CSD's bilingual newsletter, *Prahari*) are the beginnings of an archive of local history. Students and citizens' groups are welcome to borrow the AV material for viewing. Perhaps with these beginnings, Kamaladevi's dream of awakening the Delhiwalla to the civic problems of this city and the aesthetics of urban design will become a reality.

### CSD AS A PRESSURE GROUP

Ever since the statue of George V was removed, the India Gate Canopy

has been the subject of debate. In July this year, CSD reacted to a newspaper report that the Canopy was to be demolished by issuing an open letter to the Prime Minister pressing for its retention. Subsequently, many individuals and some organizations wrote in to support CSD's stand. The discussion organized by CSD on 17 August '89 was very well attended and emphasized the growing involvement of citizens, not just architects and officials, with such an issue.

This was not the first time that CSD sought to save an 'unprotected' monument. Last year, the Society succeeded in halting the demolition of a sixteenth century building, the Chaumachi Tomb in Mehrauli by a stay order from the courts. Delhi Administration and the Archaeological Survey have been persuaded to treat the historic British cemeteries in Delhi as 'protected' areas and to free them of encroachments.

Perhaps the most daunting feature in Delhi for such activities is the mystification that makes it difficult to identify the agency of local government to be addressed in any particular case. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC), the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), and the ASI all have overlapping and interwoven territories. Delhi has a State Department of Archaeology too, but this has not yet been given the necessary powers to acquire monuments. One way out of this confusion is to have a clearing house for enquiries and protests related to land use. The Conservation Committee constituted by the Delhi Administration earlier this year (on which CSD has a representative) could fulfil this role. So far, the Committee has not met at all! Another agency could be the Urban Art Commission, which could be made as active and autonomous as it used to be, in addition to being more representative. In any case, all proposals for changes of land use should be communicated to the citizens through near site maps, and a time limit given for objections to be filed.

#### EXPOSURE AND ADVERTISING

In contrast to western countries where souvenir shops at monuments are often as popular as the monuments themselves, we in India make no effort to 'sell' our history. Unfortunately, this

*The policy of letting monuments speak for themselves extends to a lack of availability of good guide books to the monuments at site, and an absence of guide books in Hindi and other languages. It is a pity that the complaint has to be repeated. The A.S.I.'s excellent guide book, *Delhi and its Neighbourhood* by Y D Sharma is available only at two or three monuments in Delhi, and there is, unfortunately, no Hindi translation. Our electricity and water bills are painstakingly made available in two languages, but in this far more important area,*

*there is nothing in Hindi.*  
**CATCHING THEM YOUNG**

World Heritage Day, 18 April, is commemorated every year by CSD in association with children. Last year there was an exhibition of poems, cartoons and drawings by school children, and this year, a workshop was organized where children, teachers and resource persons discussed how monuments could be 'adopted' by nearby schools. CSD's newsletter for children, *Bal Prahari*, plans to publish articles by children and will suggest games and activities linked to environment and conservation.

The National Service Scheme NSS has many students as members all over the country. It is not very widely known that among the activities that can be taken up by NSS groups is the conservation of monuments. CSD has encouraged NSS volunteers in Delhi colleges to have 'conservation camps' on three occasions. The Archaeological Survey was very cooperative; they screened films and took the students on short excursions, apart from arranging to have staff demonstrate building and repairing techniques. To describe these makes dull reading, but the actual experience of seeing the work was exhilarating. CSD hopes to work out a "Lec-Dem" (lecture demonstration) series to illustrate the components of historic architecture, engineering, masonry, decorative crafts using sandstone and marble, inlay work, the use of water, landscape elements and street plans.

The most exciting part about belonging to CSD is that its reach is always greater than its grasp. The constraints of time and finances mean that we cannot always do as much as we hoped. But we believe in a variation of Parkinson's Law, that activities expand according to the enthusiasm available. And since the Society is constantly attracting new members, there is every reason to suppose that it will be continuously active.

For more details, contact: Madhu Bajpai; N-7/c, Saket, New Delhi - 7.  
Tel: 6852279

*Dr. Naraini Gupta is a historian and teaches at the Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi. She has to her credit, several books on History. She has been the Past President of CSD and is one of its most active members.*



walking through Delhi's History

*Our readers would love to know if there is a local conservation movement in your area. Do send in your details along with photographs. If you don't have a conservation movement near where you are, why don't you start one?*

policy of letting monuments speak for themselves extends to a lack of availability of good guide books to the monuments at site, and an absence of guide books in Hindi and other languages. It is a pity that the complaint has to be repeated. The A.S.I.'s excellent guide book, *Delhi and its Neighbourhood* by Y D Sharma is available only at two or three monuments in Delhi, and there is, unfortunately, no Hindi translation. Our electricity and water bills are painstakingly made available in two languages, but in this far more important area,

# AN INTERVIEW WITH MEDHA PATKAR

RUKMINI SEKHAR

*A firm, unshakable conviction and determination belies the frail, gentle appearance of Medha Patkar, leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement). Her struggle and what it represents have left the shores of the river Narmada to countries all over the globe. Her fight against the mega-dams on the Narmada, displacement of people, forests and cultural linkages, her mobilisation of villagers and tribals in this all too difficult task, has won her the Right to Livelihood Award and more recently the Goldman Environment prize. Medha's cause is to stem the bursting floodgates of destructive processes of development launched in the name of progress, which threatens to drown us all. Here she talks on various issues concerning environmental politics, ideologies and leadership.*



**Rukmini Sekhar : What made you take up this cause which has now become your life's mission?**

**Medha Patkar:** I was born into a family that was concerned and involved with the betterment of the disadvantaged. As I grew, I began to look at the various aspects of change, social, political and economic. I realised that disadvantaged communities like the Dalits and the tribals had acquired a special discriminatory focus in developmental planning, despite what has been said in the constitution. Actual planning ignored their problems. I began to get interested in *adivasis*. I was studying, "The Impact of Economic Development on Tribal Societies". During my field work experience till 1976 in and around Bombay, and then, from 1976 onwards as a faculty member of the Tata Institute, I was involved with rural agencies. As a consequence, most of my vacations were spent with rural communities. I was working in Gujarat, in the North-East tribal belt of the state. I realised that one overwhelming problem was the encroachment on their resource base by "developers", who

*Only people can bring about real change. One-day revolutions are short lived and unsustainable. In order to be a catalyst in the process of alternate development planning, you cannot speak on behalf of the masses unless you are a part of them.*

propagated a consumeristic life style. To provide the needs of a mere 10% practising such a life style, forests, land and rivers had to be controlled and manipulated. The Narmada Project has to be looked at from this angle. The movement started with the issue of displacement. Why were the original inhabitants of the land not asked whether they would like to leave or not? All these were topics. But more than all this, the movement has its base at the heart. Unless there is an emotional involvement, these battles cannot be fought.

**What kind of emotion? Do you get an "inner high" from the work**

**you are doing? Do you have a spiritual motivation?**

I don't think people will call me spiritual in the conventional sense. But I am spirited. I am convinced that if every bit of one's body, soul, energy and faith are utilised, some results will accrue. But, at the same time, in all humility, I would like to say that what each of us is doing is only a tiny particle of sand on the beach. To even boast of one's commitment is arrogance. What matters is integrity and selfless service.

**We have seen that in our systems of governance, the decision makers are the elected and elite few, while the 'mob' is dismissed as faceless and voiceless. With your experience of working with a large movement like the Narmada Bachao Andolan what do you feel about the concept of the 'mob'? Are they capable of collective leadership and hence policymaking?**

The fact that people at large have taken to this fight shows that somewhere there is this confidence and conviction that if the masses are empowered, they can influence the system. But the reality is that a small section of the economically, politically and powerful elite dominate the system. What is the way out? The answer is, peoples' empowerment. Only people can bring about real change. One-day revolutions are short lived and unsustainable. In order to be a catalyst in the process of alternate development planning, you cannot speak on behalf of the masses unless you are a part of them. Political parties have their own place, but parallel non-party formations are also important. One has to be an effective strategist, understand the real weakness of the system and how to appeal to the people. You have to have a strong perspective, be thorough on specifics and be compulsively motivated. You have to be a complete part of the lives of the people whose life you want to alter. With their strength and your own, you can fight the battle.

**You were talking of reaching out or appealing to the masses. In effect, you are talking about leadership of a certain quality. Quality leadership, it seems, almost completely died out with the freedom movement, with no one or nothing to "inspire" a nation. What do you think?**

This type of impression is created because the whole focus is on "party -

political" leadership, which sadly, today, has the power not to inspire, but control. On the other hand, some non-party organisations, which have a strong mass base, have charismatic leaders, who are even attempting to interpret leadership's structure and quality differently. Like Shankar Guha Niyogi with whom I shared many thoughts and strategies. But here, I must add something. In this scenario of voluntary action and non-political formations, there are some weaknesses which must be checked. Some N.G.O.'s seem to derive their strength, not from the people who they are working for, but from foreign funding, support from political parties by campaigning for elections and so on. In order to check this trend, an alternative pattern of voluntary action must be established.

**Can you illustrate this?**

You will be surprised to know how many people are actually interested in various causes and would like to extend their support. But because of not knowing how or where to begin, they become long distance viewers of what the activists are doing. Within a voluntary movement, there should be workers who are, in particular, engaged in the task of reaching out to such supporters, who not only are capable of

monetary assistance, but of moral and spiritual support as well. For instance, suppose there is a crisis and we are thrown in jail. The issue is not merely to get us out, but these supporters can make the 'issue' understood by society. Moncy, as far as possible, should come forth from the people themselves. They should feel that the movement is theirs and therefore, the onus of propping it up. To fall back on political or foreign funding which comes easily these days, distort the very characteristic of voluntary action, sometimes demanding the sacrifice of creativity, resourcefulness, a grass-root motivation and lack of vested interests. Society is not in the mood to give without expectations and this is sad. And then, there is the upcoming breed of 'neobureaucratic N.G.O.'s who live in urban areas, profess solidarity with the down-trodden, have the right 'contacts' for funding, give up nothing and still be an 'activist'.

Most macro-level policies, if not in close conjunction with micro-bases will not be sustainable in the long run. A true activist will be fired by a vision and will "build" a movement and not

*The whole focus is on  
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air-lift it and place it somewhere, hoping it will work. This way, you will spend 20 years or more of your life, fighting for tribals or with forest guards and not make any real impact on the Forest Policy of India.

**Can you comment on the ideology of environmentalism? Are there dimensions which can lift this cause above the banalities of data bases?**

I think environmentalism in this country, as it has come about today has its basis in the Western concept of it. I must distinguish between "aam-environmentalism" (mass-based) and "khaas environmentalism" (elite-based). The former would mean the sustainability of resources from not just the conservation point of view but from the point of view of *distributive justice*, ie. fulfilling the minimum needs of the maximum number of people. This is what the maximum good of the maximum people is. When "developmentalists" accuse environmentalism of not being capable of fulfilling the maximum good of the maximum people, then it means that we have reached a stage when we cannot even juxtapose the two. In my opinion, there need not be a tussle between the two. As long as there is a genuine understanding of the man-nature relationship and a deep questioning of the directions of human-kind, most things fall into place. Politically, both capitalism and socialism, extreme ideologies, have not given this aspect serious consideration. So, a kind of third ideology or a third force is necessary.

#### **What is this third force?**

**Environmental Democratic Socialism.** Countries in Latin America, or Africa or India can understand this ideology because of the back-lash on our resource matrix. We cannot blame everything on the "population problem" although we cannot ignore it, certainly. The third force is a study of the human being in relation to nature, and how this relationship is really designed, controlled and managed and the impacts thereof. We are compelled today with our dwindling resources, impoverished populations and more marginalised societies, not to mention our degrading values and the death of the spirit, to understand this new force. The socialist groups are thinking about it and capitalist societies are increasingly turning environment conscious. If colours mean anything, then what is required is a combination of green and

red ideals!

**There is an increasing tendency to link ecology and a new cosmology or spirituality, based on an ecological perspective. It is almost as if we have made a full cycle in our understanding. One of the most salient dimensions of this eco-spirituality is based on simplicity. What do you feel?**

That certainly is the case, or should be. Consumerism, rampant and greedy, is at the basis of the death of both the spirit and the environment. That is perhaps why the link was so obviously

*As long as there is a genuine understanding of the man-nature relationship and a deep questioning of the directions of human-kind, most things fall into place.*

made in today's context. But the link was always there and was understood by philosophers, mystics and poets of all religions.

**It is now 44 years after independence. The post-independence generation is believed to have sold out to the rat race begun by the industrial revolution. On the other hand, there is an opinion that there is a revival, resurgence or reassessment among them about fundamental issues. What is the reality?**

The reality is quite complex. One cannot make sweeping statements. Society is changing at a rapid pace.

The first category of youth are those of the hinterland unexposed to technological change and consumerist extravaganzas. Some symbols however do percolate and then they opt for mobility by adopting some of these symbols, clothes or a diploma in computers. Some opt for a college education without really planning their future. Can a college education give an agriculture-practising youth some extra skills in his current occupation or merely place him afloat in the outside world full of unemployment? This is a section which is confused and one has to protect them from too much ad-hocism.

On the other hand, there is the urban educated youth from the upper

classes who has joined hands with the post-industrial revolution techno-boom and is well on the way to a different type of confusion. Confusion of values, which leads him to go through the whole routine and then some of them do opt out to examine the other side.

And then there is the solid middle class, rooted as they are through the traditions of their ancestors. It is a complex section of society faced with the most immediate impact of present day developments, be they technological or economical. They constitute a sensitive intelligentsia. It is this class that produces the maximum number of activists, and doers. They can be the catalysts of change for both marginalised people and outer society, because they know the realities of both.

To develop rural youth is vital because in them lies the potential of local leadership. To neglect them would be to forever label them as "deprived or alienated". They then epitomise poor leadership and are easily co-opted by the outside system.

Each category, therefore needs a different treatment. There definitely is a revival, born out of the "need" for it in today's complex society. There is an emergence of activists in various areas, who's work at the field level has created a macro-level impact. Youth, which is another word for idealism, can and do get attracted to struggles which appeal to their innately optimistic nature. In the development/environment area, the struggles against the Narmada, Tehri, Subarnarekha and then the Chaitisgarh struggle etc. have, surprisingly brought several young people together from all parts of the country from all classes of society. It is an experience of adventure, of self-knowledge, of giving, of caring and understanding the mysteries of life.

*Photographs: Rukmini Sekhar.*

We are happy that  
Medha Patkar has  
agreed to be part of the  
SPIC-MACAY Scholar-  
ship Scheme and to keep  
students with her during  
the coming summer  
vacations.

# JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

**J**oint Forest Management (JFM) has emerged as one of the most effective ways of sustainably managing our forests. Local communities organise to regenerate and protect degraded forest lands and, in return, have access and rights over the timber and Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP). Such an arrangement serves the twin purpose of protecting forests and providing biomass and incomes to local communities.

## FEATURES

- Joint forest management systems exist in about 11 states.
- Village groups organise themselves to protect a specified forest area.
- They form Village Forest Protection Committees.
- Membership mostly comprises of all village households.
- These groups are either certified by State Forest Departments or are Regis-

tered Societies or Informal Community groups.

- Responsibilities include protection, silvicultural activities, micro-planning, free labour, NTFP distribution.
- Reserve, Protected, Panchayat, Community and Undemarcated forest lands are looked after by village forest protection groups.

## ECONOMIC RETURNS

All NTFP, specially for the landless and women. Traditionally JFM existed informally in some states like West Bengal. In June, 1990, the Ministry of Environment and Forests issued guidelines supporting the involvement of communities and NGO's to work with the Divisional Forest Officers in protecting and regenerating degraded forest lands. Subsequently, the Governments of Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal have issued enabling orders

in support of this policy.

JFM propagates a reversal from existing centralised governmental control over forest resources to that of common property usership, something which peoples' groups all over the country have been struggling to realise. The concept is indelibly linked to that of duties and responsibilities, whereby it is in every person's best interest to protect these resources.

## IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT:

- (a) What is being done in different states regarding propagation of JFM.
- (b) How to initiate JFM in your area.
- (c) Documentation and reference material on (i) case studies (ii) micro-planning (iii) regeneration methods (iv) species - their viability and use (v) non timber forest produce, (vi) training needs and modules, (vii) NGO's, resource persons and institutions.
- (d) Also if you/your group is involved in JFM, do write to us about working experiences, case studies, networking activities interaction with government agencies and so on. ●

For further details, contact:  
Angana, C-17/A Munirka,  
New Delhi - 110 067

Our main program is to commence an Afforestation project, in the region adjacent to Kadumane Village in Sakleshpur Taluk. This is in keeping with the major objective of contributing towards the welfare and upliftment of the disadvantaged rural community, through an integrated development program, of which afforestation is a major component. The other objectives are the utilization of wasteland and human resources for natural resource generation, in the form of food, fodder, fuel, fertilizer, etc., and valuable non-wood forest produce.

We need the active participation of concerned people from all walks of life. They should commit themselves to environmental causes. There are three main projects of SAVE:

1. Kadumane Main Project (MOOLADHARA) in Sakleshpur,
2. "CITY FOREST" Programme for Bangalore, and
3. 1 million seedlings generation programme for Bangalore.

To seek the involvement of people we have planned a series of awareness programs, including Earth day concerts, vigils, exhibitions etc.



# SAVE

For membership details, write to:

The Chief Coordinator,  
136, I Cross, Residency Road,  
Bangalore-560025  
Tel. 584679

One Vishnusharman shrewdly  
gleaning  
All wordly wisdom's inner meaning.  
In these five books the  
charm compresses  
Of all such books the world  
possesses.

## INTRODUCTION



*It is said that an ounce of sense contained in the Panchatantra is better than a ton of scholarship. Most of us are familiar with it from our childhood as 'once-upon-a-time' stories and have read them in abridged forms or in comics. Rarely have we encountered a literal translation in verse form. Indeed, these wise verses, often epigrammatic in style, go to make the real character of the Panchatantra. The stories are charming when regarded as pure narrative, but it is the beauty, wisdom and wit of the verses which lift the Panchatantra above the best story books.*

*The Panchatantra is a 'niti shastra' or textbook of 'niti'. The word 'niti' roughly means the 'wise conduct of life'. It is witty, mischievous and profoundly sane. The word, 'Panchatantra' means, the 'Five Books', 'the Pentateuch'. Each of the five books are independent, consisting of a framing story with numerous, inserted stories, told by one or another of the characters of the main narrative. The device of the framing story is familiar in oriental works, as in the Arabian Nights. The large majority of the actors are animals, who have, of course, a fairly constant character. Thus, the lion is strong, but dull of wit, the jackal, crafty, the heron stupid, the cat, a hypocrite. The animal actors present far more vividly and shrewdly, undeviated and free of all sentimentality, a view, that piercing the humbug of every false ideal, reveals with incomparable wit, the sources of lasting joy. And this is how it happened....*

**A**nd this is how it happened. In the southern country is a city called, Maiden's Delight. There lived a king named, Immortal-Power. He was familiar with all the works dealing with the wise conduct of life. His feet were made dazzling by the tangle of rays of light from jewels in the diadems of mighty kings who knelt before him. He had reached the far shore of all the arts that embellish life. This king had three sons. Their names were Rich-Power, Fierce-Power and Endless-Power and they were supreme blockheads.

Now when the king perceived that they were hostile to education, he summoned his counsellors and said, "Gentlemen, it is known to you that these sons of mine, being hostile to education, are lacking in discernment. So when I behold them, my kingdom brings me no happiness, though all external thorns are drawn. For there is wisdom in the proverb:

*Of sons unborn, or dead, or fools,  
Unborn or dead will do;  
They cause a little grief, no doubt;  
But fools, a long life through.*

and again:

*To what good purpose can a cow  
That brings no calf nor milk, be  
bent?  
Or why beget a son who proves  
A dunce and disobedient?*

Some means must therefore be devised to awaken their intelligence."

And they, one after another, replied; "O King, first one learns grammar, in twelve years. If this subject has somehow been mastered, then one masters the books on religion and practical life. Then the intelligence awakens."

But one of their number, a counsellor named Keen, said: "O King, the duration of life is limited, and the verbal sciences require much time for mastery. Therefore let some kind of epitome be devised to wake their intelligence."

gence. There is a proverb that says:

*Since verbal sciences have  
no final end,  
Since life is short, and  
obstacles impend,  
Let central facts be picked  
and firmly fixed.  
As swans extract the milk  
with water mixed.*

"Now there is a Brahmin here named Vishnusharman, with a reputation for competence in numerous sciences. Entrust the princes to him. He will certainly make them intelligent in a twinkling."

When the king had listened to this, he summoned Vishnusharman and said, "Holy sir, as a favour to me you must make these princes incomparable masters of the art of practical life. In return, I will bestow upon you a hundred landgrants."

And Vishnusharman made this answer to the king, "O king, listen. Here is the plain truth. I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred landgrants. But if I do not, in six month's time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name. Let us cut the matter short. Listen to my lion roar. My boasting arises from no greed for cash. Besides, I have no use for money; I am eighty years old, and all the object of sensual desire have lost their charm. But in order that your request may be granted, I will show a sporting spirit with reference to artistic matters. Make a note of the date. If I fail to render your sons, in six month's time, incomparable masters of the art of intelligent living, then His Majesty is at liberty to show me His majestic bare bottom."

When the king, surrounded by his counsellors, had listened to the Brahmin's highly unconventional promise, he was dumbstruck. He entrusted the princes to him, and experienced supreme content.

Meanwhile, Vishnusharman took the boys, went home, and made them learn by heart five books which he composed and called: (i) The Loss of Friends (ii) The Winning of Friends (iii) Crows and Owls (iv) Loss of Gains (v) Ill-considered Action.

These the princes learned, and in six month's time they answered the prescription. Since that day this work on the art of intelligent living, called *Panchatantra*, or the Five Books, has travelled the world, aiming at awakening the intelligence in the young. •

### THE STORY OF THE LAST EPISODE...

The two crafty jackals, Cheek and Victor, who were in the service of Rusty, the lion King, examined the reasons for the king's fear and alarm at the bellowing sound made by a prodigious bull. Lively, who survived Fate and lived on the banks of the Yumuna in the jungle. The two jackals, cunning as ever and knowing they will always be retainers, discussed various ways of entering into the confidence and trust of the king. Sycophancy was one way, they decided. The other was to play one up against the other-

divide and rule. They decided to investigate the source of the sound that so frightened their king so as to win his favour. How can he, the Lord of the forest be disarmed by a mere sound? As the saying goes:

*I thought at first that it was full  
of fat; I crept within  
And there I did not find a thing  
Except some wood and skin.*

"How was that?", asked Rusty, and Victor told the story of THE JACKAL AND THE WAR DRUM.

## THE JACKAL AND THE WAR-DRUM

In a certain region was a jackal whose throat was pinched by hunger. While wandering in search of food, he came upon a king's battle ground in the midst of a forest. And as he lingered a moment there, he heard a great sound.

This sound troubled his heart exceedingly, so that he fell into deep dejection and said: "Ah me! Disaster is upon me. I am as good as dead already. Who made that sound? What kind of a creature?"

But on peering about, he spied a war-drum that loomed like a mountain-peak, and he thought: "Was that sound its natural voice, or was it induced from without?" Now, when the drum was struck by the tips of grasses swaying in the wind, it made the sound, but was dumb at other times.

So he recognized its helplessness, and crept quite near. Indeed, his curiosity led him to strike it himself and he became gleeful at the thought: "Aha! After long waiting food comes even to me. For this is sure to be stuffed with meat and fat."

Having come to this conclusion, he picked a spot, gnawed a hole, and crept in. And though the leather covering was tough, still he had the luck not to break his teeth. But he was disappointed to find it pure wood and

skin, and recited a stanza:

*Its voice was fierce; I thought it stuffed  
With fat, so crept within;  
And there I did not find a thing  
Except some wood and skin.*

So he backed out, laughing to himself, and said:

*I thought at first that was full of fat,*

.....and the rest of it.

"And that is why I say that one should not be troubled by a mere sound." "But," said Rusty, "these retainers of mine are terrified and wish to run-away. So how am I to reinforce my resolution?" And Victor answered: "Master, they are not to blame. For servants take after the



master. You know the proverb:

*In case of horse or book or sword,  
Of woman, man or lute or word,  
The use or uselessness depends  
On qualities the user lends.*

"Then summon your manhood and remain on this spot until I return, having ascertained the nature of the creature. Then act as seems proper." "What?" said Rusty, "are you plucky enough to go there?" And Victor answered: "When the master commands, is there any difference between 'possible' and 'impossible' to the good servant? As the proverb says:

*Good servants, when their lords  
command,  
Behold no fear on any hand.  
Cross pathless seas if he desire  
Or gladly enter flaming fire.*

*The servant who, his  
lord commanding,  
Should strive to reach  
an understanding  
On labors hard or easy,  
King's counsellor should never be."*

"If you feel so, my dear fellow," said Rusty, "then go. Blest be your journeying."

So, Victor bowed low and set out in

the direction of the sound made by Lively. And when he was gone, terror troubled Rusty's heart, so that he thought: "Ah, I made a sad mistake in trusting him to the point of revealing what is in my mind. Perhaps this Victor will betray me by taking wages from both parties, or from spite at losing his job. For the proverb says:

*A servant suffering from a king  
Dishonor after honoring,  
Though born and trained  
to service, will  
Be eager to destroy him still.*

"So I will go elsewhere and wait, in order to learn his purpose. Perhaps Victor might even bring the thing along and try to kill me. As the saying goes:

*And when he was gone,  
terror troubled Rusty's heart,  
so that he thought: "Ah, I  
made a sad mistake in  
trusting him to the point of  
revealing what is in my  
mind.*

*The trustful strong are caught  
By weaker foes with ease;  
The wary weak are safe  
From strongest enemies.*

Thus he set his mind in order, went elsewhere, and waited all alone, spying on Victor's procedure.

Meanwhile Victor drew near to Lively, discovered that he was a bull, and reflected gleefully: "Well, well! This is lucky. I shall get Rusty into my power by dangling before him war or peace with this fellow. As the proverb puts it:

*All counsellors draw profit from  
A king in worries pent,  
And that is why they always wish  
For him, embarrassment.*

*As men in health require no drug  
Their vigor to restore,  
So kings, relieved of worry, seek  
Their counsellors no more."*

With these thoughts in mind, he returned to meet Rusty. And Rusty, seeing him coming, assumed his former attitude. So, when Victor had come near, had bowed low, and had seated himself, Rusty said: "My good fellow, did you see the creature?" "I saw him," said Victor, "through my master's grace." "Are you telling the truth?" asked Rusty. And Victor answered: "How could I report anything else to my gracious master? For the proverb says:



*Whoever makes before a king  
Small statements, but untrue,  
Brings certain ruin on his gods  
And on his teacher, too.*

And again:

*The king incarnates all the gods.  
So sing the sages old;  
Then treat him like the gods; to him  
Let nothing false be told.*

And once again:

*The king incarnates all the gods.  
Yet with a difference;  
He pays for good or ill at once;  
The gods, a lifetime hence."*

"Yes," said Rusty, "I suppose you really did see him. The great do not become angry with the mean. As the proverb says:

*The hurricane innocuous passes  
O'er feeble, lowly bending grasses,  
But tears at lofty trees;  
the great  
Their prowess greatly demonstrate.*

And Victor replied: "I knew beforehand that my master would speak thus. So why waste words? I will bring the creature into my gracious master's presence." And when Rusty heard this, joy overspread his lotus face, and his mind felt supreme satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Victor returned and called reproachfully to Lively. "Come here you villainous bull! Come here! Our master Rusty asks why you are not afraid to keep up this meaningless bellowing." And Lively answered: "My good fellow, who is this person named Rusty?"

"What!" said Victor, "you do not even know our master, Rusty?" And he continued with indignation: "The consequences will teach you. He has a retinue of all kinds of animals. He dwells beside the spreading banyan tree. His heart is high with pride. He is lord of life and wealth. His name is Rusty. He is a mighty lion."

When Lively heard this, he thought himself as good a dead, and he fell into deep dejection, saying: "My dear fellow, you appear to be sympathetic and eloquent. So if you cannot avoid conducting me there, pray cause the master to grant me a gracious safe-conduct." "You are quite right," said Victor. "Your request shows *savoir faire*.

*My friend. I won the old master's favour for you, and made him give you a safe-conduct. You may go without anxiety. Still, though you have favor in the eyes of the king, you must act in agreement with me. You must not play the haughty master.*

*The earth has a limit,  
The mountains, the sea:  
The deep thoughts of kings are  
Without boundary.*

Do then remain in this spot. Later, when I have held him to an agreement, I will conduct you to him."

Then Victor returned to Rusty and said: "Master, he is no ordinary creature. He has served as the vehicle of blessed Shiva. And when I questioned him, he said: Great Shiva was satisfied with me and bade me crop the grass beside the Yumuna. Why make a long story of it? The blessed one has given me this forest as a playground."

At this Rusty was frightened, and he said: "I knew it, I knew it. Only by special favor of the gods do creatures wander in a wild wood, bellowing like that, and fearlessly cropping the grass. But what did you say?"

"Master," said Victor, "I said: 'This forest is the domain of Rusty, vehicle of Shiva's passionate wife. Hence you come as a guest. You must meet him, must spend your time in brotherly love, must eat, drink, work, and play, and make your home with him.' All this he promised, adding: 'You must make your master grant me a safe-conduct'"

At this Rusty was delighted and said: "Splendid, my intelligent servant, splendid! You must have taken counsel with my own heart before speaking. I grant him a safe-conduct. You must hasten to conduct him here, but not until he too has bound himself by oath toward me. Yes, there is sound sense in the saying:

*Polished, fully tested,  
Sturdy too, and straight  
Are the pillars proper  
To a house-or state.*

Again:

*Wit is shown in hours of crisis:  
Doctor's wit, in sore disease;  
Counsellors', in patching friendship—  
All are wise in hours of ease."*

Now Victor thought, as he set out to meet Lively: "Well, well! The master is gracious to me and ready to do my bidding. So there is none blest than I. For

*Four things are nectar; milky food;  
A fire in chilly weather;  
An honor granted by the king;  
And loved ones, come together."*

So he found Lively, and said respectfully: "My friend. I won the old master's favor for you, and made him give you a safe-conduct. You may go without anxiety. Still, though you have favor in the eyes of the king, you must act in agreement with me. You must not play the haughty master. I for my part, in alliance with you, will take the role of counsellor, and bear the whole burden of administration. Thus we shall both enjoy royal affluence. For:

*A sinful chase -yet men can stalk  
The treasures of the crown;  
One starts the quarry from its lair;  
Another strikes it down.*

And again:

*Whoever is too haughty to  
Pay king's retainers honor due,  
Will find his feet are tottering—  
So merchant Strong-Tooth with  
the king."*

"How was that?" asked Lively. And Victor told the story of MERCHANT STRONG TOOTH.

To be Continued.

In 1924, Arthur W. Ryder, the well known American oriental scholar translated the Panchatantra from Sanskrit to English. It is one of the best of all existing translations in any foreign language. The text here translated, dates back from the year 1199 A.D. We are happy to serialise and present the Panchatantra, interspersing verse and prose as translated by Ryder and published by Jaico.

Illustration: Rusiam

# THE DANGEROUS DEMI-GODDESS

MANOJ DAS



*Erotic sculpture is not novel to India. But, intriguingly, it is to be seen either on the outer walls of a temple or in a form where its eroticism is totally subdued by its art. It was never known to have created any law and order problem.*

The story goes that once three artists, A, B and C, graduated from the same institute and equally skilled, became candidates for the post of an art teacher. They were asked to draw any object they liked. C was selected. When congratulated by A and B, the successful candidate asked them, "What had you chaps drawn?" Coming to know that A had sketched a buffalo and B a monkey, he observed, "That explains my success. Any judge can compare your performance with a real buffalo and a real monkey and find fault with your works. But I had sketched a ghost."

Nobody can find fault with the statue of Yakshi—the colossal nude in con-

crete dominating the Malampuzha gardens at Palakkad, Kerala for the last two decades—in terms of realism or naturalism. But the problem is, it has of late begun to possess the beholder and the law can hardly play the role of an exorcist. A group of enchanted young spectators, according to an authentic report, ran amok like the Biblical pigs when possessed by the "legion" (of spirits) and, since there was no lake at hand for them to get drowned in, pounced on a lady and humiliated her.

To leave the sculpture in peace at the risk of its occasionally wreaking havoc on others' peace or to remove it from public gaze, that is the question.

The Yakshas are demi-gods and

like the other groups of the species—the Vidyadharas, the Apsaras, the Gandharvas and the Kinnaras—can well afford to attire themselves in heavenly linen and ornaments. It is difficult to understand why a modern sculptor visualised a female of this particularly affluent tribe in an abandoned position amidst an acre of grass, totally bare. But she has her fans who insist that any prohibition on her on account of her nudity should automatically extend to a number of frescoes in Ajanta and Ellora.

Erotic sculpture is not novel to India. But, intriguingly, it was to be seen either on the outer walls of a temple or in a form where its eroticism was totally subdued by its art. It was never known to have created any law and order problem. What then is wrong with the Yakshi? Does the answer lie in its being nothing more than a gifted sculptor's fancy for a voluptuous creation, bearing a mythical name only to legitimise its questionable posture? Or does it lie in its wrong situation (the Yakshi is to be carved as part of temple sculpture, according to the *Agni Purana*), its suddenness and its isolation from an appropriate context? What is the feeling the sculptor expected it to arouse in the spectator? Did he hope that its obvious sensuousness can be offset by its awe-inspiring name or its overwhelming volume?

Even if honest answers to these questions were to indicate that the sculpture, an example of high accomplishment though it is, could not guarantee against some titillation in an average beholder—a titillation to neutralise which there was neither a touch of the sublime in it nor the reverential atmosphere of a shrine around it, it could continue to sit harmless in a different milieu. But today, obscenity and vul-

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garity have pervaded our climate. Even though wise commercial establishments are doing their best, engaging sophisticated minds and media, to make bold vulgarity pass off as a form of new culture, all they have achieved is a state of uncertainty and unpredictability in human behaviour.

Cut-throat consumerism is a culture devoted to stimulating so many hungers and its survival depends on keeping the hungers alive, for, to satisfy them would prove self-defeating to it. We may be proud of a great cultural heritage, incredible spiritual achievements and mature pragmatism, but our state of affairs is dubious at the moment. In our social culture we swing between inertia and easy excitement. We are eager to hitch our wagon to a star, but are most uncertain with regard to our priorities amidst the stars. If today the star of patriotism inspires us, tomorrow it is regionalism or language or caste or worse.

What moulds our conduct? From my memory emerged a significant story of great antiquity:

After a day's labour in his fields, a young farmer was resting under a solitary tree when a royal herald galloped past him, making an unusual announcement. The king had dreamt that a nasty jackal was circling his throne and trying to jump on to his lap. Whoever can explain the dream to his satisfaction shall be suitably rewarded.

"Only if I could explain it!" the young man muttered to himself wistfully.

"Why not! I can tell you its meaning. But will you give me half of the reward you receive?"

The speaker was a charming little bird hopping down from the tree-top to a lower branch.

"I will be grateful, sweet bird, and I promise to part with half of my reward," said the younger man.

"The throne represents the kingdom. The jackal represents falsehood and deception. It's trying to hop onto the king's lap suggests that these nasty elements, after polluting the atmosphere of the kingdom, are making a bid to attack even the highest rung of the administration. Ask the king to be alert and cautious," the bird instructed.

The young man satisfied the king with his interpretation of the dream and received a handsome reward. But he thought, "What a pity that half of it must go to the bird!" He returned home

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taking a different route and he forgot all about it before long.

Five years passed. He was now a prosperous farmer. One day, the king's general called him out and ordered him to report at the palace, for the king had dreamt another intriguing dream, of a bloodstained dagger swinging around his head. The panicky farmer submitted that he had given up the habit of explaining dreams. But the general must carry him live or carry his head! The farmer obtained a day's leave and, in the evening, went near the tree and sought out the bird and tearfully narrated his predicament to it.

"Will you give me half of your reward?" asked the bird. The farmer readily promised to do so. "The dagger symbolises violence. The atmosphere is steeped in it. Ask the king to be on his guard," said the bird. The reward the farmer received this time was even greater and of course he decided against giving a single coin to the bird. But he feared that the bird might report the matter to the king. So, as soon as he sighted the bird, he hurled a stone at it in a bid to kill it. Luckily the bird escaped.

Another five years later the king sent for the farmer once again, for he

had dreamt that a handsome lamb jumped onto his lap and he had fondled it. The farmer's plea for his inability to explain it was as expected, rejected. Once again he took refuge with the bird. After he had promised to give half of his reward to the bird, the latter revealed to him that the lamb symbolised peace and faith and that these were the qualities dominating the atmosphere now.

The king was pleased with the explanation and he gave the farmer a sackful of gold coins. This time, the farmer carried the whole sack to the bird. But the bird assured him that it had no use for the coins.

"But will you kindly forgive me my past conduct?" asked the repentant farmer.

"Your conduct?" the bird asked in its turn.

"Don't you remember how mean I was when I avoided meeting you the first time and how cruel I was when I tried to kill you the next time?"

"Oh that," remembered the bird. "To be honest I did not expect you to do anything different. First time, falsehood and deception dominated the atmosphere. You deceived me. Second time, there was violence in the atmosphere. You proved violent towards me. Now that peace and faith govern the atmosphere, no wonder that you should act faithful to me."

Perhaps most of us vibrate to the ideas and thoughts, dreams and desires that are around us. Nothing short of a qualitative change in the atmosphere brought about by a collective aspiration for things beautiful and elevating, can guard man against his own rotten conduct, any time, anywhere. ●

*Courtesy: The Hindu.*

*Manoj Das is one of our foremost writers. He belongs to Orissa, and he writes in English. He is a poet, novelist, columnist, short story and essay writer, having won several Awards, including the Sahitya Akademy Award in 1972. In the course of his career, he was greatly influenced by Sri Aurobindo and after a stint of teaching English in Cuttack for four years, he now works at the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry at the International Centre of Education. He is acknowledged as an authentic interpreter of India's cultural and spiritual heritage.*

reader experience the depths of grief and agony of the bereaved in these stories but they also are a sad commentary on the falsity of the living world.

*The Maze* is an amazing story. And together with *About Face* and *Zeroing In* deal with the ambience of work places. These stories are spiked with a series of images which convey the sights and sounds and the reality of work places. Sukumaran, Shanta and Rajaraman are all victims of the frustration and hypocrisy that pervade the office atmosphere.

The narrative strands of these stories weave around the complexity of human relationships drawing attention to the clash of cultures and values, and, in the process observing life closely and compassionately. In doing so, Lakshmi moves smoothly from one locale to another conveying with remarkable ability the tastes and smells of the places. The stories in the present collection bring out the writer's deftness in pinning down nuances of feelings which are otherwise hard for words to get hold of.

A major drawback is that the book is shot through with typographical errors. The price (Rs. 120/-) puts the book beyond the reach of the average reader, unless he is able to get it through libraries. A paper back edition which is cheaper and due to be released in a few months from now, should however, create ripples among short story lovers. Viewed in its entirety it is a well written book and certainly justifies the reviews on its cover.

●  
Jayashree Menon Kurup

### THE ENERGY DIMENSION

*A Practical Guide to Energy in Rural Development Programmes*  
C. Hurst and A. Barnett  
Published by:  
Intermediate Technology Publications

Examples of rural people wresting control of their lives back from the interventionist 'development industry' suggest that traditional management of resources can be successful. Yet the norm is for official aid projects to establish the parameters of development efforts. With that reality strongly in mind, this comprehensive practical guide to energy in rural development programmes helps administrators investigate and plan for use of energy in project implementation.

Aiming to make the energy dimension an automatic priority in project planning, and focusing on official international aid not conventionally considered energy projects, this precise reference work is based on an evaluation covering twenty-five years of energy projects in the African, Caribbean and Pacific States. Professionals involved with research, design and implementation of aid projects will benefit from this lucid study: it provides the minimum information needed to pose neglected, fundamental questions to the experts about energy use integral to rural development schemes.

Based on the astute observation that aid administrators and people working in rural development typically have little time to read, subjects are concisely elucidated with bold headings, inset main points, and italicised principal phrases, conspiring to ensure this book's accessibility to frustrated, pressured development workers.

A question-and-answer opening enables a basic education of key technical issues (use of woodfuels, petroleum products, rural electrification). In the overview, simple root questions are the interesting ones - they are also the most pertinent. The authors practical response to

ment projects) abound in this profession, and so often the organisational machine ensnares the indiscreet operator. This dilemma is finely considered and could be mandatory reading for development idealists - whether administrators or not - for it

*It provides the minimum information needed to pose neglected, fundamental questions to the experts about energy use integral to rural development schemes.*



the question, 'why should we be concerned about energy in rural development' considers the macro and micro-economic, health, cultural and social aspects. Unsurprisingly they are sympathetic in their humanist findings to Fritz Schumacher's founding ethos of Intermediate Technology Development Group: the work must be people-centred, not driven by bureaucracy.

Complex administrative pitfalls (which apply to all types of formulaic develop-

ment projects) abound in this profession, and so often the organisational machine ensnares the indiscreet operator. This dilemma is finely considered and could be mandatory reading for development idealists - whether administrators or not - for it

We learn to beware of the advocate of technical solutions looking for a problem to solve, short-term institution building and fleeting injections of cash. But standards of planning, documentation and evaluation are encouraged, and there is an excellent, careful summation of seven key factors for the success of rural energy projects.

'Energy in the context of rural development' leaves ad-

ministration to highlight the dynamics of aid to the rural sector, plus the evolution of development strategies. Just as unequal land distribution, unemployment and disease are frequent characteristics of rural life; basic health care, employment training, and decent drinking water are essential - but costly - services. All require energy, hence knowledge of its application.

Fashion in the theory of rural development has permeated into practice since World War II. The Community Development model dominated until the mid-sixties, advocating non-participation in the political and economic process,

followed by the Integrated Rural Development idea widely adopted in the seventies as a multi-dimensional 'systems' approach.

Donor agencies promoted acceptance of I.R.D. as a broader solution incorporating many levels (economic, social, technical) of tightly controlled intervention. Finally, after manifest failure to alleviate the Third World's chief problem - food shortage, it was deemed inadequate due to administrative rigidity.

Today, agencies look for intense, flexible response capabilities in a project at the grassroots level. Here institutions can grow and function effectively unhampered

by restrictive development 'blueprints'.

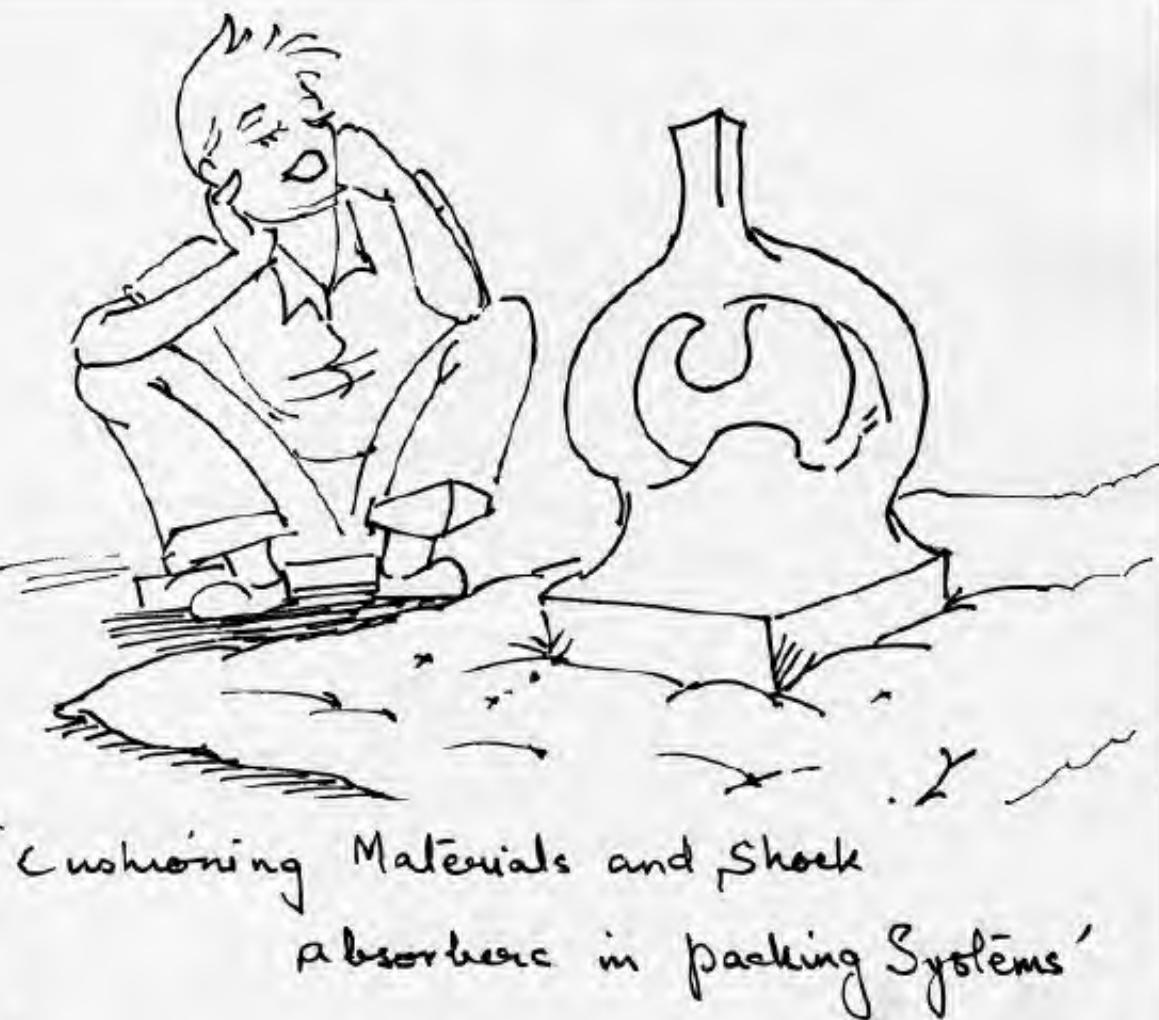
Local women's involvement in the village fuel scenario is of fundamental importance, and amply covered here with arguments for social forestry, reforestation strategies, and stove programmes. Information on the conventional supplies of energy for major rural uses, and an assessment of the renewable energy position are both catalogued in this eclectic selection.

The long annexes are technically gratifying, linking field application to the theory of earlier chapters. A practical check list suggests a framework for informed action for energy use

in general and specific rural projects. Importantly, the annexes of 'fact sheets for rural energy supply options' is a distinguished reference list of the thirty foremost English and French language (this book is also published in French) organisations offering information on application of energy technologies in rural areas. As expected from this thoroughly researched compilation, the bibliography is extensive.

With hidden optimism this compact guide embodies that rarely articulated quality - common sense.

*Samuel Connor*



## RHYTHM

## EXCERPTS FROM A NOTEBOOK

**T**he sun changes in colour with every season. In late sravan when the grey clouds split, the sun spills out and scatters on everything, sharp, strident, hurting, like broken glass. A few days later the grey clouds retreat. On the deep blue sky little white clouds scurry like sail-boats. That unsettles you. Makes you want to jump out of your skin. Then the sun turns mellow, from milky white to blanched gold—it no more hurts. When a cold wind blows it tingles your spine with warmth. But the spring's sun is bodiless like a draught of white wine. But it keys up everything. It makes the white whiter, the red redder; the blue it turns into gemstone blue. Then finally the maddening forge of summer.

It is like a forest of many suns this summer noon.  
Every side one's shadow falls  
It is nibbled away  
By a counter-shining sun  
At once.

I wonder whether there can be substance without shadow.  
Shadow-bare  
Ghost-like  
I move light-impelled  
Between one orb of light and another.

This is ego-slaughter.  
Almost as if the balls played the player.

Night makes the world another world.  
The day's world is crowded with things. You get lost in it. Or they push you around. To keep a hold on yourself you have to ignore a lot of them. You have to brush some aside to find your way. So the more you see the less you choose to see. The night rubs these out, or packs them all together. And puts them on your shoulder like a blanket. So

you move with the world on your back, feeling bigger than you are; one-piece with nature. Night's life is nature's life.

In the night's deep furrow  
Between two lidded leaves of sleep  
Like a night-lily opening on the waters.

It is as if all one's likes had joined in one person  
The bracing breaths of air  
The coloured orbs of vision  
The trees and landscape wrapped in the sky's blue foil  
The throbbing of the inner row of senses  
And drawn one in  
Between two coagulated shadows  
Two lobes of intermeshing mystery

There is no movement  
Just that thrill of pleasure  
No action  
Just the muted hide and seek  
Of an image and its shadow  
In indecisive lineament  
Between two lidded leaves of sleep.

The day's light, then, cuts dead open  
All life's mystery  
Sharpens the contours and shrinks the inner core  
Cuts each limb adrift in autonomous action  
The eye sees without knowing  
The ear hears without feeling  
The body acts without the inner push.  
And the wish-bud sears within its slender stem.

The lazy acts roll out  
Like listless coins  
From a mechanical unit.

K. G. Subramanyan  
Courtesy : Art Heritage

Her creations of transient forms  
That pull the chord of cadences  
Overflow wherever the eye falls

In the tides that rise.....  
In the cataracts that fall  
Every night and every day  
That heartbeats in bosoms play  
Or the seasons that come and go  
The Red Giants  
or the White Dwarfs  
Through galaxies never outgrow  
This continuity of change  
and its spell!  
Unfolding the micro and  
the cosmic scale  
As the Ages tick away or  
Seconds grow

Into a mystique variety of Rhythms!  
Long anonymity followed  
by metamorphosis  
Or prolific breeds marching to extinction  
All come and go  
All again to be born anew  
This ceaseless cycle abides  
The cosmic rhythm of Her breath  
No Beauty, nor a beautiful Hymn  
Nothing escapes its own oblivion  
And yet will manifest again  
Replenished by Her ubiquitous  
Rhythm!

-*Gitanjali Dighe*

## BEFORE LEAVING....

In the locus of an unmasked seed  
After the night creeps in  
I want to see a few shades before I leave.

In the locus of tranquil moonlight  
From a starry sky  
I want to feel a few shades before I leave,  
Beyond all my expectations  
Of a silent darkness  
I want to create a few shades before I leave....

-*Sumit Bose*

*Errata*  
The photographs of Kumar Gandharva and Balasaraswati in the March/April issue of THE EYE were by Avinash Patricha. We regret the omission.

## THE RAG-PICKER

I can be seen  
in the nooks and corners  
Of every road.

Sneaking in the streets,  
submerged in garbage piles,  
up to knees;  
Frantically scanning the waste,  
searching for rags, junks and left  
overs.  
My face dirty;  
The piece of rag around my loins  
dirtier,  
ribs protruding, sunken eyes-  
staring into a hollow.  
And you- the onlooker,  
raise your finger at me-  
the rag picker,  
a pest  
a menace to society!

Darkness descends;  
another day's done  
Come the night  
and I pull the torn,  
worm-eaten blanket around me,  
but to no avail;  
Shivering into the dawn.  
The rising sun,  
Outlines my emaciated figure,  
bending upon the garbage heap;  
searching, scanning with gnarled  
fingers,  
hunger gnawing at the very root of  
my being.

-Chandana Chakravarti.

## BREEZE

The blade trembles  
To the bird's song  
That flows  
Over the branches, over the trees,  
Over my hair, over my clothes,  
And gently stirs a happy rose.  
The blade too scents, the rose too  
feels,  
The branch too waves and the leaves  
too thrill  
From one end of my garden  
To the far reaches of the world.

-Parikshit Singh



Photograph :Yogesh Sharma

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Editorial help for THE EYE on a voluntary basis.  
(Oops, how many does that leave us with?) Mature ,  
well-read person/s,language proficient,itching to get a point of view  
across,please write in to us.Great for those with means and starved of soul  
satisfaction.Great also for those without means and soul satisfaction.

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**VIEW****SANJULA SHARMA**

**W**hat Van Gogh tried to express in his famous 'Sunflowers' or Keats in his Odes is something we cannot really *know* but perhaps can *experience*. Rarely can we hit the truth, for these and several others have left us no live voice, only a legacy of their creative genius. Almost thoughtlessly we take on the mantle of deciphering and dissecting a great work of art. Do we really have the authority to do so?

The temptation to probe the mind of a great artist has been too strong to resist. Self-styled art scribes pick up pen and with cool confidence put non-existing thoughts into an artist's head. An innocuous line of the poor poet to describe the setting sun is glorified to mean the end of life. Scholars have laboured sleepless nights over literature's 'Dark Lady'. Her creator, Shakespeare is probably having the last laugh.

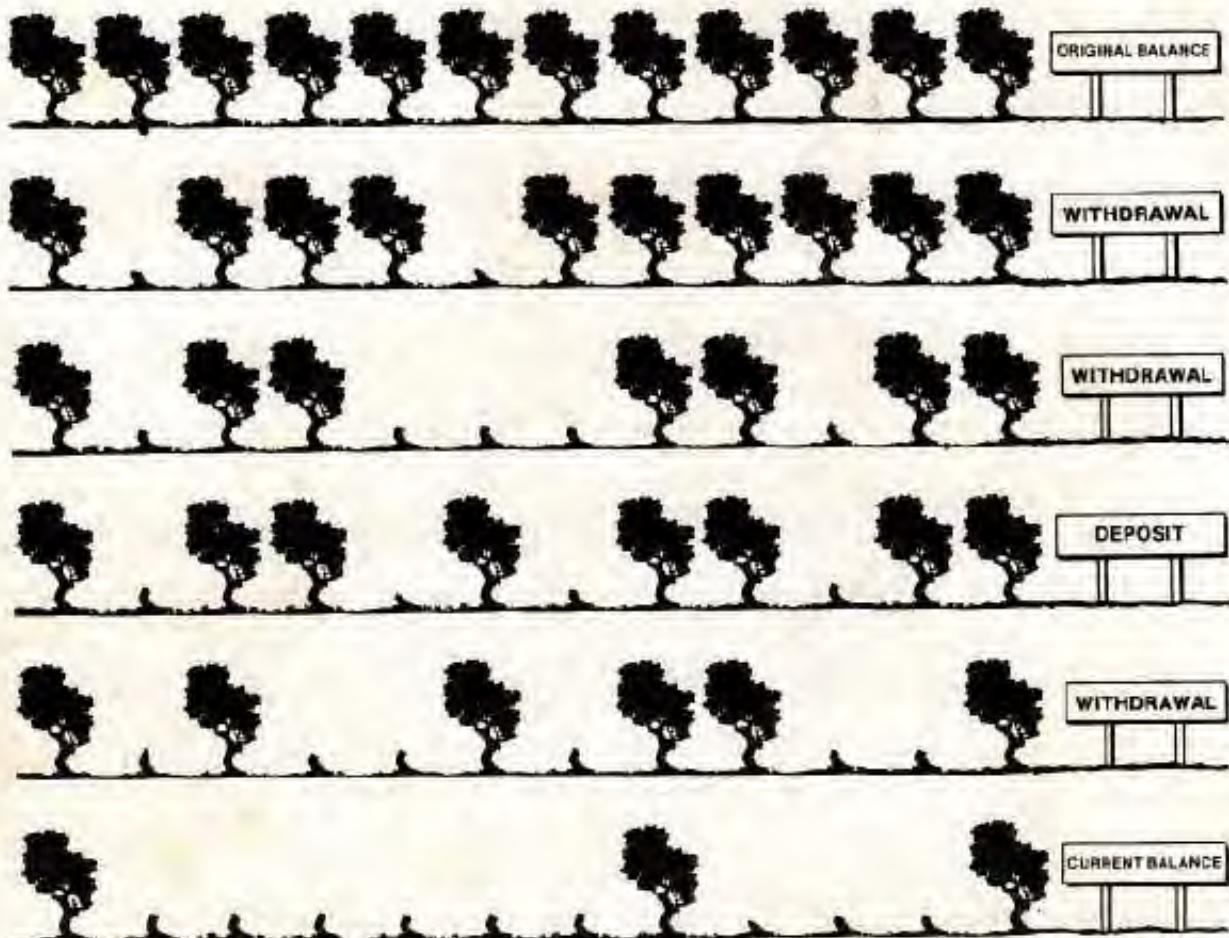
Arm twisting the artists can go to the extent of making impressionists, Monet and Renoir narrate a tale which they never set out to do in the first place. Samuel Beckett would have been shocked to see so much

action in his 'Waiting For Godot', and Frank Stella's Jasper in a Dilemma to see himself reduced to colour, form and shape. Modernism, vying not so much for excellence as for originality gives the art scribe unlicensed poetic license to probe, twist, and elicit answers to non-existing questions.

Can, or rather, does the art scribe guide our sensibility? For, as we trail critical guidelines, the mind begins to rule the heart. Slowly, intellect replaces sensitivity and the focus shifts from how art actually strikes the viewer to how it *should*. Can he deny us the privacy of experience?

Why can't we let the Dalis, the Brechts and the Coleridges be? For how many can view the work in the same spirit as the author wrote? ■

*Sanjula Sharma, 27, is a post-graduate from Jadavpur University, Calcutta. She has worked for 'The Telegraph' and is now a freelance journalist based in Delhi*



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